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Chess

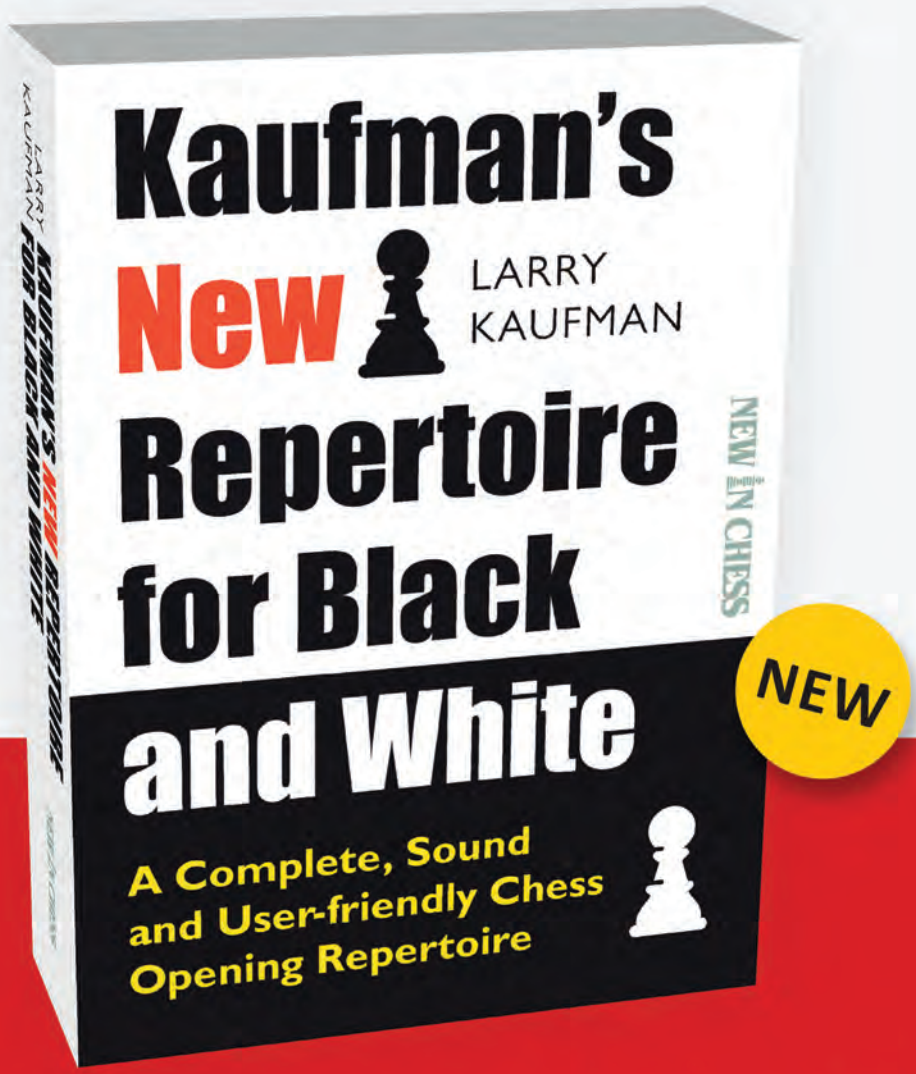
RADJABOV RETURNS

ISSN 0964-6221

- FIDE World Cup – Radjabov was the last man standing in Khanty-Mansiysk
- Coming of Age? – Andrew Ledger made his England senior debut in Croatia
- My ’59 Memorable Wins – Looking back at Tal’s clean sweep over Fischer in 1959

VISIT…

Larry Kaufman is back!



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Contents

Editorial 4
Malcolm Pein on the latest developments in the game

60 Seconds with...FM Alex Longson 7
We catch up with one Director of the UK Chess Challenge

Radjabov's Return 8
Teimour Radjabov was the last man standing at the World Cup

Coming of Age? 12
Andrew Ledger made his senior debut for England in Croatia

Stunning Blows 16
James Plaskett was present at the World Senior Team Championship

Chess is Coming Home...to Newcastle! 20
Tim Wall reports from the second reborn Northumbria Masters

Never Mind the Grandmasters... 24
Carl presents his epic battle with Anatoly Karpov no less

How Good is Your Chess? 26
Daniel King is always entertained by David Navara's play

My '59 Memorable Wins 30
John Henderson on the 1959 Candidates where Tal beat Fischer 4-0

Studies with Stephenson 35
Brian looks at how the studies world is attracting young interest

The Good Lady meets the Badmaster 36
Bob Jones explains how G.H. Diggle became 'The Badmaster'

Forthcoming Events 37

Fischer confronts his Nemesis... 38
James Essinger looks at a clash between Bobby and Efim Geller

An Introduction to Prophylaxis 42
Jose L. Vilela explains all about this important if confusing concept

Find the Winning Moves 48
Can you do as well as the players in St. Louis and Khanty-Mansiysk?

Overseas News 51
Humpy Koneru returned to form in the Women's Grand Prix

Home News 52
John Saunders reports from the anniversary of Barclays Bank CC

Solutions 53
Who won a copy of Yochanan Afek's *Extreme Chess Tactics*?

This Month's New Releases 54
The latest reviews from Sean Marsh and Danny Gormally

Saunders on Chess 58
John demonstrates that taking a break doesn't always help

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Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein **@TelegraphChess**

Carlsen is Coming

Once again, the London Chess Classic will host the finals of the Grand Chess Tour. Although the event was a tad disappointing last year, by the time the decision had to be made this year it was clear that Magnus was mathematically qualified, even with two tournaments remaining, and that should ensure plenty of entertainment.

The downside is right now we only know the identity of one of the four players. The next GCT qualifying event is in Bucharest which ends on November 10th and I'm certain we won't know at least one of the qualifiers until the end of Calcutta leg on November 26th, just six days before the final begins.

Play begins on Monday December 2nd with the semi-finals. Each match consists of two Classical games, one per day, with day three devoted to Rapid and Blitz. There are two Rapid games, played with 25 minutes on the clock, and four Blitz games. The scoring works as follows: Classical – 6 points for a win, 3 points for a draw and 0 points for a loss; Rapid – 4 points for a win, 2 points for a draw and 0 points for a loss; Blitz – 2 points for a win, 1 point for a draw and 0 points for a loss. This makes the total number of points equate to 28 and so the first player to 15 wins. That means a win in Classical is close to decisive which is another thing I don't particularly like about the format. Perhaps the Classical games should come after the faster games.

In the event of 14-14 there will be tie-breaks. One thing to watch out for in the Rapid and Blitz: the clocks will be using delay and not increment. So, for instance, in the Rapid games the time limit is 25 minutes plus 10 seconds delay. This is commonly used in the U.S., but not here and it takes a bit of getting used to when you first experience it.

Delay means that the clock does not start running down until the delay ends each move. As such, in the Rapid you will see the clock remains at 25.00 unless the player reflects for more than 10 seconds at which point the clock starts to run down. After every move the delay is reset and the main difference is that you cannot gain time. There is no increment so if your time runs out you simply have to play a move every 10 seconds, which is a bit like the old lightning/buzzer chess that used to be so popular. What happened to that by the way?

Tickets are now on sale for the six playing days: £25/day or just £80 for all six days, and if you enter one of the festival events that includes entrance to the auditorium. Please see LondonChessClassic.com for tickets and/or to enter an event, simultaneous or chess teacher training course.

The Auditorium at Olympia, but look closely and you'll spot that it's children, not the stars of the Grand Chess Tour, about to do battle on the stage, watched by MC Lawrence Trent.

'Sold out' in days

Your regular reminder that the London Chess Classic comes courtesy of generous donors to Chess in Schools and Communities. The most rewarding component of the event takes place every morning and afternoon when state school children come to experience the LCC. They get a chess lesson, a simul and a chess show which is now legendary in some schools who return year after year.

The show is delivered in the auditorium where the GMs play. Chris Ward, Lawrence Trent and formerly Danny King enchant the children with chess-themed films, quizzes and the chance to play on the live boards. This is where you see chess as a noisy spectator sport with the children cheering on their friends as they play Blitz on the live boards and the game are on the screens. The 2,500 places were all taken a few days after applications opened. All events are free of course to state schools and the charity extends travel grants to the many schools that come from outside London.

The Forgotten Man

Teimour Radjabov was scarred by his failure at the London Candidates in 2013 (+1 =6 -7), and limited the number of Classical tournaments that he played in subsequent years. It seemed that the former prodigy had lost his ambition. He still played in the FIDE Grand Prix, the Gashimov Memorial in his home country of Azerbaijan and for his country in Olympiads, but not a lot else. He occasionally showed how talented he is. I recalled recently a brilliant takedown of Peter Svidler which I often use as a model game in this structure when I'm coaching juniors.

T.Radjabov-P.Svidler
Geneva Grand Prix 2017
English Opening

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e3 ♘xc3 6 dxc3

The pawn structure on the queenside favours White, but in a subtle way. The move ...c7-c5, if exploited correctly, can turn out to be a serious positional concession. The b6-square is potentially weak and the d5-square harder to defend. Tony Miles was one of the first to demonstrate this as White.

6...♕xd1+

6...♕c7 was played by MVL in the semi-final against Radjabov and he was soon worse after 7 e4 e6 8 ♗d3 ♗e7 9 ♕e2 ♗d7 10 0-0 0-0? (10...h6 was playable or 10...♗c6) 11 e5 ♗c6 12 ♘g5 h6 13 ♗h7+! and 1-0 in 45 moves, Radjabov-Vachier-Lagrave, World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019.

7 ♔xd1 ♗f5

The computer likes this move, but after White's reply, a move he wants to play anyway as the knight is heading for its

optimal square on c4, e3-e4 gains a tempo.
8 ♘d2! ♘c6 9 e4 ♗e6 10 ♔c2 g6 11 ♗c4 ♗d7
If 11...♗xc4 12 ♘xc4 ♗g7 13 ♗e3 b6 14 a4 or 14 ♖hd1 first with persistent pressure.
12 ♘b3 b6 13 a4! ♘e5 14 ♗b5 a6
This move is best avoided, so perhaps 14...0-0-0!?.
15 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 16 ♗e3 e6 17 ♖hd1 0-0-0 18 ♘d2! ♗e7 19 ♘c4 ♔b7

20 a5! ♖hf8
Black's structure is fatally weakened after this, but if he tries 20...b5 then after 21 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 22 ♖xd6 he has no moves as the knight has to protect b6.
21 axb6 ♘xb6 22 ♘a5+ ♔c7 23 ♗f4+ ♗d6 24 ♗h6 ♖fe8 25 ♘b3 ♖a8 26 ♗e3 ♘d7
Black cannot defend a6, c5 and the d-file. If 26...♔c6 27 ♘a5+ ♔c7 28 b4 cxb4 29 ♗xb6+ and wins.
27 ♖a5 ♔c6 28 ♖da1 ♔b6 29 ♖5a4! ♖ec8 30 ♘a5

30..♗e7?
30...♔c7 31 ♘c4 wins the a6-pawn as 31...♘b8 32 ♖d1 ♗e7 33 ♗f4+ ♔c6 34 ♖a3 leaves Black helpless in the face of ♖a3-b3-b6 mate, and if 34...♗d8 35 ♖d6+ ♔c7 36 ♖dxa6+.
31 ♖b4+ 1-0
If 31...♔a7 32 ♖b7# or 31...♔c7 32 ♖b7+ ♔d8 33 ♖d1 ♖c7 34 ♘c6+.

Perhaps Radjabov has regained some motivation after a remarkable performance at the World Cup which he won after eliminating his better-known compatriot Shak Mamedyarov followed by Jeffery Xiong,

After equalising the score in the third matchgame, Teimour Radjabov took his World Cup final with Ding Liren to a tie-break. Both sides missed chances in the four Rapid games, but come the blitz Radjabov proved the stronger, winning 2-0 for his biggest success in many a year.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and, in the final, Ding Liren in a tremendous match which Radjabov only stayed in after winning on demand in the third Classical game.

Here is the key game from the last eight against the American prodigy Jeffery Xiong who had enjoyed a fantastic tournament, eliminating Anish Giri and Jan-Krzysztof Duda.

T.Radjabov-J.Xiong
FIDE World Cup,
Khanty-Mansiysk 2019
Grünfeld Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗b5+
When I saw this move on the board I felt slightly sheepish, but wasn't sure why. So I went into my shed to seek out my copy of *Grünfeld Defence: Exchange Variation* by Malcolm Pein, published by B.T. Batsford in 1981, and sure enough it is written: "7 ♗b5+? This move is a complete waste of time and unless Black plays totally ineptly he should secure excellent prospects."
7...c6 8 ♗a4 0-0
8...b5 9 ♗b3 and now 9...b4 is the alternative. Here 9...a5 10 ♘f3 a4 11 ♗c2 0-0 12 0-0 all looked fine in 1981, but nowadays I might only recommend 9...b4.
9 ♘e2 e5
I've always thought the pure Grünfeld method was best here: 9...c5, and if 10 d5?! e6! or, as in my book, 10 0-0 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♗g4 12 f3 ♗e6 13 ♗e3 ♗c4 14 ♖b1 assessed as equal in Peev-Stean, Lublin 1975. I'm happy to say the computer concurs. 9...b5 10 ♗b3 a5 is also reasonable and was played by Kasparov against Kramnik.
10 0-0 ♘d7 11 ♗e3 ♕e7 12 ♗c2

An interesting novelty. Black has far less pressure on the centre than is normal in the Grünfeld. Radjabov defends the e4-pawn and challenges Black to find a counter to the natural f2-f4. The bishop, which is often a target in the main lines on c4 or b3, is nicely tucked away and ready to emerge when required.
12...♘b6 13 f4! exd4
Maybe Black should have tried 13...♘c4 14 ♗f2 exd4 15 cxd4 ♕a3!?.
14 ♗xd4 ♖d8 15 f5! ♗xd4+
One very nice line runs 15...c5 16 f6 ♕e8 17 fxg7 ♗e6 18 ♘f4 ♗c4 19 ♘xg6! hxg6 (19...♗xf1 20 ♘h4 cxd4 21 ♘f5 ♕e6 22 ♕h5 ♗e2! 23 ♕xe2 d3 24 ♗xd3 is also very strong) 20 ♕c1!! cxd4 21 ♕h6 f5 22 ♖ae1!! ♗xf1 23 ♔xf1 fxe4 24 ♔g1! and wins.
16 cxd4 c5 17 ♕d2?
Radjabov was very critical of this move afterwards, describing it as childish by which I believe he meant that it is too crude to play for ♕h6, f6 and mate on g7. 17 ♕d3 was stronger when 17...cxd4 18 ♗b3 is unpleasant for Black as f7 is under fire, or 17...♗d7 18 ♖ae1 ♗e8 19 ♕h3 cxd4 20 ♗b3 d3 21 ♘f4 d2 22 fxg6 hxg6 23 ♘xg6

and, finally, 17...gxf5 18 exf5 ♘d5 19 ♖f3 prevents ...♕e3+ and threatens f5-f6.

17...♘c4 18 ♕d3

Not 18 ♕h6? ♗xf5 19 exf5 ♕xe2 20 f6 ♕e3+, removing the queens.

18...♘e5 19 ♕a3 ♘c4 20 ♕c3

20 ♕g3!? cxd4 21 ♘f4 was more direct.

20...b5 21 f6 ♕d6 22 d5 ♖e8?!

The right idea, but the wrong way. Black must rule out e4-e5 and he remains secure after 22...♘e5 23 ♘g3 c4 or 22...♗d7 23 ♖ae1 ♘e5 when his pawns might roll.

23 ♗d3! ♘e3 24 ♗xb5! ♖xe4 25 ♘g3 ♘g4 26 ♖ac1 c4

It was time to put the brakes on with 26...♗b7 27 ♕xc5 ♕xc5+ 28 ♖xc5 ♖e5. but both players had little time to figure that out.

27 h3 ♗b7 28 hxg4 ♖xg4 29 ♗c6!

Not 29 ♖f3 ♕c5+ 30 ♕e3 ♕xb5 31 ♕h6 ♕c5+ 32 ♔f1 ♕f8 when Black is a pawn up with another set to fall.

29...♖xg3 30 ♕xc4 ♗a6

31 ♕f4

There were many pitfalls to avoid and 31 ♕xa6 ♖h3 32 gxh3 ♕g3+ is a perpetual. Instead, here 32 ♕c4 (guarding d4 and f4) 32...♕h2+ 33 ♔f2 ♕g3+ 34 ♔e2 ♕e3+ (34...♖h2 35 d6 ♖e8+! would also be quite scary to calculate) 35 ♔d1 ♖h4 36 ♕b3 ♖d4+ 37 ♔c2 ♖d2+ 38 ♔b1 escapes to victory, but was certainly not a line for time trouble.

31...♖d8 32 ♖ce1 ♕c5+

If 32...♗xf1 33 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 34 ♖e8#.

33 ♖f2 ♖c3 34 ♖e7!

The exclam is for practicality as this prevents ...♕f8.

The Grand Swiss on the Isle of Man has been a staggeringly strong Open. Magnus Carlsen faced Alexey Sarana in round 2 and needed all his defensive might to escape with half a point.

34...♖c1+?

As I've found to my cost recently, when you have almost no time at all a check is enticing and often wrong, although even after 34...♖c2!? 35 ♕e3 ♕xe3 36 ♖xe3 ♖c4 37 ♖a3 ♖c1+ 38 ♔h2 ♗c4 39 ♖xa7 White should win.

35 ♔h2 ♖c3 36 ♕h6 1-0

The Manx Candidate

As the magazine went to press, the $435,000 FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss on the Isle Man was nearing its conclusion. Putting a Candidates place up for grabs like this certainly democratises the process and 154 players were involved, including 120 nominated by FIDE. It's a shame this came at the expense of one of the places awarded on the basis of rating, while the organiser's wildcard was retained.

Readers may well be aware of Luke McShane's storming performance in the early rounds, which saw him reach board one and come within a whisker of toppling Fabiano Caruana. We will have a full report next month. In round 9 (of 11) Levon Aronian was facing David Anton Guijarro, the Spanish GM who crushed Alexander Grischuk in just 24 moves to reach the leading score of 6/8, while Caruana was taking on Carlsen who was approaching 100 games unbeaten and lurking just half a point behind him.

We now know the identity of three Candidates: Fabiano Caruana as beaten finalist, Ding Liren as defeated finalist in the World Cup, and Teimour Radjabov as World Cup winner. The Isle of Man will provide a fourth, and the Grand Prix, where Grischuk and Mamedyarov are in pole position, two more. Add in one on the basis of rating, which ooks like being Anish Giri, and the eighth is at the discretion of the Russian organisers. I imagine they will opt for Sergei Karjakin.

Back to Batumi

The European Team Championships will be well underway when the magazine lands. England's Open team, captained by yours truly, is Michael Adams, Luke McShane, David Howell, Gawain Jones and Nick Pert. The Women's team is Jovanka Houska, Katarzyna Toma, Sarah Longson, Ingrid Lauterbach and Kanwal Bhatia. I'm particularly pleased that Katarzyna is making her debut after she made such an impression at the British Championships in Torquay and then at the English Women's Championship in Hull.

Luke McShane warmed up for the European Teams in Batumi with a fine display on the Isle of Man, so nearly defeating Caruana no less.

60 Seconds with...

FM Alex Longson

Born: 1st October 1982, Tameside.

Place of residence: Cheshire.

Occupation: Director of the UK Chess Challenge.

Enjoyable? Very enjoyable and challenging. A refreshing change from my previous career in finance.

And home life? Married with our first child on the way.

But sometimes good to escape to: I'm a huge Formula 1 fan and look forward to the British Grand Prix every year which I attend with my brother.

Sports played or followed: I like running – it keeps me fit which is important with having a desk job.

A favourite novel? *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving.

Piece of music? Roy Orbison's 'I Drove All Night'.

Film or TV series? *The Mighty Boosh.*

What's the best thing about playing chess? It's not always possible, but those moments when you can shut out the world and just consider the moves are a kind of bliss.

And the worst? That feeling that you will never be as good as you think you should be.

Your best move? 18 ♗h3 against John Shaw was an original pawn sacrifice which yielded me a good position, though I messed up the technical phase and eventually lost.

A.Longson-J.Shaw
3Cs vs Wood Green 2016

18 ♗h3! ♗xh3 19 ♕xh3 dxc3 20 bxc3 ♖xd3 21 ♕f1 ♖d7 22 ♗e3 ♖xd1 23 ♖xd1 ♕e7 24 ♘b6 left White with more than enough for his pawn.

But less memorable than your worst move? 15 ♖d1 from a different 4NCL game against Brett Lund was pretty shocking. 15...♗xh2+ doesn't work, but I forgot that he might transpose the move order.

A.Longson-D.B.Lund
3Cs vs Spirit of Atticus 2015

15 ♖d1?? ♕xd1+! 16 ♕xd1 ♗xh2+ 17 ♔xh2 ♖xd1 18 ♘xf7 ♖e8 19 ♘g5 ♖f1 0-1

And a highly memorable opponent? I've never played Mickey or Nigel, but have faced David Howell (when he was 13) and Gawain Jones several times. In fact I played Gawain twice in the same tournament in Manchester way back when he was young enough that I could beat him, and twice at that!

Favourite game of all time? The 10th matchgame of the Carlsen-Karjakin world championship was a very tense and dramatic must-win game for Carlsen. I was lucky enough to watch this live on my first and only trip to the States.

The best three chess books: *62 Most Instructive Games of Chess Ever Played* by Irving Chernev, Yuri Averbakh and Michael Beilin's *Journey to the Chess Kingdom*, and *The Even More Complete Chess Addict* by Mike Fox and Richard James.

Is FIDE doing a good job? I feel things are moving in the right direction. It's good that there is a competitive and stable world championship cycle for both the top men and women.

Or your National Federation? I think there are some hard-working and committed people involved with some good initiatives being worked on. I'm optimistic.

Any advice for either? Make it easier for organisations to sign up new members en masse.

Can chess make one happy? As part of a balanced lifestyle, yes!

A tip please for the club player: At the end of your career imagine you are going to write 'My 60 Most Interesting Games of Chess'. Try and make every game you play a candidate for that collection.

Ed. – Organised by Alex and Sarah Longson, the Delancey UK Schools' Chess Challenge culminated recently in the Terafinal which was won by Koby Kalavannan. We'll have a full report next time.

Rajabov's Return

Former world no.4 Teimour Radjabov was the last man standing in Khanty-Mansiysk

That Ding Liren reached the final of the FIDE World Cup was scarcely a surprise considering the world no.3's dominant victory at the Sinquefield Cup, but it was still an impressive achievement partly because play concluded in Saint Louis just under a fortnight before Khanty-Mansiysk began. What was, however, a surprise was that Ding was joined and then outstayed in the final, not by another member of the top-ten, but a former star whom we hear much less of these days, Teimour Radjabov.

It is now some six years since Radjabov's disastrous showing at the Candidates tournament in London, one which prompted him to allow chess to take much more of a back seat in his life. He still turned out for Azerbaijan in team events and played the odd top tournament, but even then he rarely looked inspired, his once beloved King's Indian and French Defences having been long largely replaced by a rock-solid repertoire which rarely suffered defeat.

We should remember that it was only in 2003 that Radjabov sensationally defeated Garry Kasparov with the black pieces at Linares, a landmark victory achieved just before his 16th birthday. Now aged 32, he arrived in Khanty-Mansiysk quite fresh, having played just four major events in 2019: 6½/13 at Wijk aan Zee (+1 =11 -1), an undefeated 4½/9 at the Gashimov Memorial, elimination at Hikaru Nakamura's hands in the first round of the Moscow Grand Prix, and an unbeaten 4/7 at Dortmund in July.

Radjabov was arguably the best rested of the whole field in western Siberia, while still boasting a hardly shabby 2758 rating which made him the tenth seed. In contrast, it was top seed Ding's thirteenth major event of the year. The elite really are playing too much. Before we discuss what proved to be a surprisingly gripping final, it must be said that once again the gigantic 128-player knockout that is the FIDE World Cup produced plenty of drama, normally when matches went into a third day of tie-breaks.

In the last-16 two rising stars clashed, Jeffrey Xiong taking on Jan-Krzysztof Duda. Xiong was quickly better in their first classical game (played with a 90+30+30 time control), but would go on to lose before roaring straight back to force a tie-break. The 18-year-old American then went 2-1 up before his nerve again failed in a dominant position, allowing the resourceful 21-year-old Polish star to make it 2-2. That caused the time control to speed up yet further (25+10 games being replaced by 10+10 encounters), but what didn't change was Xiong's inability to put the ball in the back of the net.

J.K.Duda-J.Xiong
5th matchgame (rapid)
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♗f5 4 ♗e3 e6 5 ♘d2 ♘e7 6 c3 ♗g6 7 f4 h5 8 ♘gf3 h4 9 ♗e2 ♘d7 10 ♗f2 ♘f5 11 ♘b3 ♗e7 12 0-0 ♗h5 13 ♘e1 ♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 g5! 15 ♘d3 ♖g8 16 fxg5 ♗xg5 17 a4 ♗h6 18 ♗e1 ♗e3+ 19 ♔h1 ♕g5

White has been outplayed and already finds himself under strong pressure on the kingside.

20 ♘a5? 0-0-0 21 b4 ♖g7 22 ♖a2 ♖h8 23 ♖f3 f6! 24 b5

24 exf6? ♘xf6 25 b5 cxb5 26 axb5 ♘e4 would tee up a fatal sacrificial breakthrough on g3.

24...cxb5 25 axb5 fxe5 26 dxe5 ♗b6 27 ♘b3 ♕g4 28 ♘f4?

28...♖e8?

Far too pedestrian and totally out of keeping with Black's dynamic play thus. The stylish way to win was 28...♘g3+! (never forget to examine all checks, captures and forcing moves!) 29 hxg3 (29 ♗xg3 hxg3 30 h3 doesn't really help as White finds his defence badly overloaded after 30...♖f7!) 29...hxg3+ 30 ♘h3 ♖xh3+! 31 gxh3 ♕xh3+ 32 ♕h2 g2+ 33 ♖xg2 ♕xf3 34 ♘d2 ♕d1, which would have forced a decisive gain of material.

29 c4? dxc4?

There was certainly no shortage of arbiters when play speeded up as Jan-Krzysztof Duda and Jeffery Xiong battled for a place in the quarter-finals. The rising American star played the more impressive chess, but really stuggled to put the talented Pole away and only eventually progressed once the rapid games were replaced by blitz, which he won 1½-½.

The quarter-final tie-breaks are under way in a now fairly empty hall. In the distance MVL would go on to knock out Aronian, while the match in the foreground went all the way to Armageddon.

The players were beginning to blitz by now. 29...♘xe5! would have won, and if 30 ♕xe5 ♕xf3! 31 gxf3 ♖g1#.

30 ♕xc4+?

30 h3 ♕g5 31 ♘xe6! would suddenly have left White doing very well.

30...♔b8 31 ♕e2 ♘e3 32 ♗f2 ♘xg2??

Far too ambitious. Now White wins by force, whereas all three results would have remained very possible after 32...♘d5.

33 ♗xb6 ♘xf4 34 ♗xa7+ ♔c8 35 ♕c4+ ♘c5

Desperation as White controls all the key entry points after 35...♔d8 36 ♖xf4.

36 ♖f1 ♖eg8 37 ♗xc5 1-0

Impressively Xiong would again spring back immediately, taking the match to 3-3 before eventually progressing with a deserved 4½-3½ victory after two blitz (5+3) games. Even more dramatic though was the quarter-final play-off between Yu Yangyi and Nikita Vitiugov. In the first 10+10 game, in most unRussian fashion Vitiugov blundered away a completely drawn rook and pawn endgame before immediately hitting back. Two nervy draws followed at blitz, which led to – yes, you guessed it – an Armageddon game, which we fear poor Vitiugov must still be recovering from as you read this issue.

Yu Yangyi-N.Vitiugov
9th matchgame (Armageddon)
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 f4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 ♘f3 ♘c6 5 c3 ♘h6 6 ♘a3 ♘f5 7 ♘c2 d4 8 ♗d3 ♘h4 9 ♗e4?? ♘xg2+ 10 ♔f2 ♘xf4 11 d3 ♘g6 12 cxd4 cxd4 13 ♗g5 ♗e7 14 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 15 ♘cxd4 ♘cxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♕h5

Black is two pawns up and could now have forced resignation on the spot with 17...♕c5.

17...♘d7? 18 ♖hg1 ♘f6 19 ♕e5 ♘xe4+ 20 dxe4 f6 21 ♕h5+ ♕f7 22 ♕c5

Suddenly matters aren't so clear and the rest of the game was to be extremely painful for the strong Russian Grandmaster who remained long in his seat after the game, unable to quite believe what had occurred.

22...♕e7? 23 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 24 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 25 ♖ag1 e5 26 ♘b5 a6 27 ♘c7 ♖b8 28 ♘d5 f5 29 ♘f6 fxe4 30 ♖c7 ♗f5 31 ♖gg7 ♗g6 32 ♖gd7 b5 33 h4 h5 34 ♖g7 ♖c8 35 ♖g8+! ♖xg8 36 ♖xc8+ ♔f7 37 ♘xg8 ♔e6 38 ♔e3 ♔d7 39 ♖a8 ♗f5 40 ♖xa6 1-0

Ding and Radjabov would enjoy, or perhaps that should be endure, similar routes to the quarter-finals. Having disposed 2-0 of the World Cup's lowest-rated player, Papua New Guinea's Sean Press, Ding was forced to resort to tie-breaks to overcome Sergei Movsesian, Alireza Firouzja and Kirill Alekseenko before finally obtaining an extra day off after defeating Alexander Grischuk come the last eight with a positional tour de force.

In contrast to his eventual fellow finalist, Radjabov didn't need a tie-break to overcome Helgi Ziska in the opening round or Luke McShane's conqueror, Daniil Yuffa, in round 3, but he did against Sanan Sjugirov and especially compatriot Mamedyarov who hurled the kitchen sink at Radjabov before eventually losing his way in their fourth and final rapid encounter. Radjabov then outclassed Xiong, ripping apart the American's Grünfeld, while elsewhere in the quarter-finals rising star Yu Yangyi was somehow getting the better of Vitiugov and two-time World Cup winner Levon Aronian was turning defeat into victory.

M.Vachier-Lagrave-L.Aronian
4th matchgame (rapid)

In view of his dominant knight and White's horribly exposed kingside Black clearly has more than enough for the exchange. There was nothing now wrong with 29...♖xh3 30 ♕b2 ♕d8, but Aronian preferred to first activate the queen.

29...♕e7 30 ♖xe3?

30 f6! gxf6 31 ♕b4 was the only way to stay on the board.

30...♕xe3+ 31 ♔h2 ♕e2+

31...♘e4! would have exploited the pin, leaving White defenceless after 32 ♕b2 ♕g3+ 33 ♔h1 ♕xh3+ 34 ♔g1 ♕xd3.

32 ♔g1 ♘xd3?

It still wasn't too late for 32...♕e3+ 33 ♔g2 ♘e4!.

33 bxa6 bxa6 34 ♕b3 ♕e3+ 35 ♔h2 ♕d2+ 36 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 37 ♔h2 h5 38 ♕d1! h4??

A horrible blunder. Now White can force a won endgame, in contrast to which either 38...♘xf4 39 ♕f3 ♘d3 or 38...♘f2 39 ♕xh5 ♘e4! 40 ♕g4 ♘d2 would have forced White to display some care to hold.

39 ♖f3 ♘b2 40 ♖xe3 ♘xd1 41 ♖d3 ♘b2 42 ♖xd4 c5 43 ♖d5 ♘xa4 44 ♔g2 ♔f8 45 ♔f3 ♔e7 46 ♔g4 ♘b6 47 ♖xc5 ♔d6 48 ♖a5 ♘xc4 49 ♖xa6+ ♔e7 50 ♔xh4 ♘d6 51 ♖xd6 ♔xd6 52 ♔g5 ♔e7 53 f6+! 1-0

By the time of the semi-finals most pundits were expecting a Vachier-Lagrave against Ding Liren final. Ding faced no easy task against his compatriot, but after three draws made fewer mistakes than Yu Yangyi in an extremely sharp second rapid game.

Mikhail Botvinnik would likely have admired Teimour Radjabov's World Cup win. The Patriarch approved of playing no more than 50 games a year and Radjabov certainly arrived in Khanty-Mansiysk well rested and prepared, as well as still capable of some high-quality strategic play.

A clearly tired Vachier-Lagrave simply wasn't at the races, being put away in straightforward fashion by Radjabov in standard time. By this point it was painfully clear from the post-game interviews that the French superstar was desperate to head home for a long overdue rest, so huge credit to him for winning both rapid games after four classical draws when he and Yu Yangyi had to sit down for a third-place play-off.

Unlike Vachier-Lagrave and Yu, Ding Liren and Teimour Radjabov qualified for the Candidates tournament by virtue of reaching the final. The Azeri might have enjoyed an extra day's rest, but it was Ding who struck first in the four-game final after his opponent forgot his theory at the wrong moment.

Ding Liren-T.Radjabov
2nd matchgame
English Opening

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 e4 c5 4 e5 ♘g8 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♘xd4 ♘xe5 8 ♘db5 a6 9 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 10 ♕xd6 f6 11 ♗e3 ♘e7 12 ♗b6 ♘f5 13 ♕b4 ♘c6 14 ♕c5 ♕e7 15 0-0-0 d6?

In typical Mikenas Attack fashion White's grip on the dark squares offers him enough for the pawn, but Black had to avoid this greedy choice. Instead, 15...♕xc5 16 ♗xc5 d6! 17 ♗xd6 ♘xd6 18 ♖xd6 ♔e7 19 c5 was only a touch better for White in Korchnoi-Timman, 4th matchgame, Brussels 1991.

16 ♕a3 0-0 17 g4 ♘h6 18 ♖g1 ♘f7

Clinging on to the extra pawn, but Black is extremely cramped, in contrast to which White has the simple plan of kingside expansion.

19 f4 ♗d7 20 h4 a5 21 g5 ♔h8 22 ♕b3 ♖fc8 23 ♔b1 e5?

23...fxg5 24 hxg5 e5 was a better way to give away a major square, although even here White remains clearly for choice after 25 ♘d5 ♗f5+ 26 ♔a1 ♕e6 and then maybe even 27 g6!?.

24 ♘d5 ♗f5+ 25 ♔a1 ♕e6 26 gxf6 gxf6 27 a3 ♖ab8 28 ♗g2 ♖g8?! 29 ♘e3!

This powerful retreat emphasises that Black has a Sveshnikov from hell – he is simply too vulnerable on the light squares.

29...♘d4 30 ♗xd4 exd4 31 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 32 ♗d5 ♖xg1 33 ♖xg1 ♘h6 34 ♕b6

Regaining the pawn. Radjabov continues to fight, but his position has long been objectively lost.

34...♕d7 35 ♕xd4 ♕e7 36 ♔a2 ♘f5 37 ♕c3 b6 38 h5 ♖e8 39 h6! ♘e3

Walking into a fatal pin, but 39...♘xh6 would have been poleaxed by 40 ♖e1 ♕xe1 41 ♕xf6#.

40 ♖e1 1-0

To Radjabov's huge credit he bounced straight back.

T.Radjabov-Ding Liren
3rd matchgame
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0 8 c3 d5 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11 ♖xe5 c6 12 d3 ♗d6 13 ♖e1 ♗f5 14 ♕f3 ♕h4 15 g3 ♕h3 16 ♗e3

The start of some deep preparation. 16 ♘d2 ♖ae8 17 ♘e4 ♗g4 18 ♕g2 ♕xg2+ 19 ♔xg2 f5 hadn't given White anything at all in game one.

16...♗xd3 17 ♘d2 ♕f5 18 ♗d4 ♖fd8

Ding's usual preference, but Aronian and Carlsen no less have preferred the more common 18...♖fe8.

19 a4 h6 20 h4 ♖ac8 21 ♕xf5!

A new try. 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♗xd5 cxd5 23 ♖a5 (Black also held after 23 ♕xf5 ♗xf5 24 ♖a5 b4 25 ♖xd5 ♗e6 in So-Ding Liren,

Berlin 2018) 23...♕xf3 24 ♘xf3 had been seen in Karjakin-Ding Liren, St. Louis 2019, when 24...♖a8!? 25 ♖ea1 ♖xa5 26 ♖xa5 b4 might be Black's simplest route towards a draw.

21...♗xf5 22 ♘e4

22...♗f8?!

Played after some thought. As indicated by Radjabov, 22...c5! was a better try, although after 23 ♘xd6! (23 ♗xd5 cxd4 24 ♗b7 ♖b8 25 ♗xa6 dxc3 26 bxc3 b4 is active enough for Black) 23...♖xd6 24 ♗e5 ♖d7 25 c4 White might still hope to press a little with his bishops.

23 ♘c5 ♘b4 24 ♖e5 g6 25 axb5 cxb5 26 ♘e6!

A bolt from the blue and practically speaking a stronger choice than 26 ♘xa6 ♘c6 27 ♖xb5 ♘xd4 28 cxd4 ♖xd4 29 ♖b7 ♖d7 30 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 when Black's bishop-pair should offset the pawn deficit.

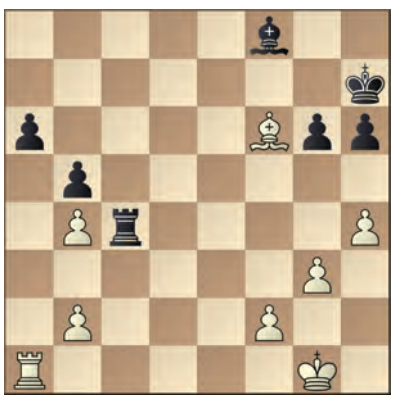
26...♗xe6

Ding cannot have felt comfortable as his opponent blitzed out all these moves, but at least he didn't allow 26...fxe6? 27 ♖xf5 gxf5 28 ♗xe6+ ♔h7 29 ♗xf5+ ♔g8 30 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 31 cxb4 when White goes two pawns to the good.

27 ♖xe6 fxe6 28 ♗xe6+ ♔h7 29 ♗xc8 ♖xc8?!

Only now did Radjabov begin to think that he might win. Remarkably he was still in his preparation, later demonstrating that 29...♘c2! 30 ♖c1 ♘xd4 31 cxd4 ♖xd4 32 ♗xa6 ♖b4 should really just be a draw in view of the opposite-coloured bishops.

30 cxb4 ♖c4 31 ♗f6!



31...♗g7?

Allowing White to demonstrate one of the points behind his last move. Black would have suffered significantly after 31...♗xb4? 32 ♖xa6, but 31...♖c6! 32 ♗c3 ♗g7 would still have been tenable: 33 ♔g2 ♗xc3 34 ♖c1 a5! 35 bxa5 b4 36 bxc3 bxc3 followed by liquidating down to just a three against two situation on the kingside.

32 ♗e7 ♖c6 33 ♖a2!

Ugly perhaps, but Black's rook is hardly all that active, so why not defend the extra pawn?

33...♔g8 34 ♗c5 ♔f7

Uncharacteristically Ding now fails to muster much resistance, but even after 34...♗f8 35 ♖a3 ♗xc5 36 bxc5 ♖xc5 37 ♖xa6 ♔g7 38 ♖b6! Black may well be unable to save the game.

35 ♔g2 ♔e6 36 b3 h5 37 ♔f3 ♔f5 38 ♖d2 ♗e5 39 ♖d5 ♔e6?

39...♔f6 was likely the last try, to meet 40 ♔e4 with 40...♖e6.

40 ♔e4 ♗f6 41 f4 ♗c3 42 f5+! ♔f7 43 ♖d7+ ♔g8 44 ♗d6 gxf5+ 45 ♔xf5 ♗g7 46 ♔g5 1-0

A brutal final position. Just compare the position of the kings.

Come the tie-break, Radjabov was fortunate to survive in the first 25+10 game, but so was Ding in their opening 10+10 encounter as notably Black began to seize the upper hand in the match. Indeed, it was in the first blitz game that Radjabov as Black punished Ding's attempt to try and exploit an extra doubled pawn in a queen and bishop against queen and knight endgame, the shorter-range piece proving its worth before Radjabov sealed a 2-0 blitz victory with a neat finish.

T.Radjabov-Ding Liren
10th matchgame (blitz)

41 ♖d7! ♕xd7 42 ♘f6+ ♔g7 43 ♘xd7 ♖b5 44 ♕c4 ♖d5 45 ♘c5 ♖fxe5 46 ♘xe6+! 1-0

And so as the players finally left the stage after 25 largely intense days in Khanty-Mansiysk, attention could turn to the Isle of Man and the next chance for many to qualify for the 2020 Candidates, which is scheduled to be held in March and April in Ekaterinburg. Radjabov will certainly enjoy being back amongst the elite there, while admitting that he would "Prepare for the Candidates, but in a really relaxing manner. I'm not sure Carlsen is there shaking in his chair at home that I'm going to prepare for it, but it's just kind of fun for me."

Armed with such a solid repertoire, as well as just the right combination of determination and relaxation, it's surely not totally impossible that we might get to see a Carlsen-Radjabov match.

2019 FIDE World Cup

(abridged results)

Last-16:

Ding Liren	3
Kirill Alekseenko	1
Lenier Dominguez Perez	1½
Alexander Grischuk	2½
Wesley So	½
Nikita Vitiugov	1½
Ian Nepomniachtchi	½
Yu Yangyi	1½
Jeffery Xiong	4½
Jan-Krzysztof Duda	3½
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	2½
Teimour Radjabov	3½
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	1½
Peter Svidler	½
Levon Aronian	3½
Le Quang Liem	2½

Quarter-finals:

Ding Liren	1½
Alexander Grischuk	½
Nikita Vitiugov	4
Yu Yangyi	5
Jeffery Xiong	½
Teimour Radjabov	1½
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2½
Levon Aronian	1½

Semi-finals:

Ding Liren	2½
Yu Yangyi	1½
Teimour Radjabov	1½
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	½

Final:

Ding Liren	4
Teimour Radjabov	6

Coming of Age?

Having just turned 50, Andrew Ledger made his senior debut for England in Croatia

I turned 50 this year and so became eligible for a whole raft of new events, giving an alternative to the usual approach of a group of us trying to find a random international Open somewhere interesting. Given that my brothers and usual chess-travelling friends are mostly older than me, one obvious option was to try a senior team event. After some mutual head scratching, my brothers and I reckon it's about 37 years since we first played in the same chess team; the 2nd Bedford Boys Brigade. But, along with Dave and Steve and with the inclusion of my fellow Sheffield and 4NCL team-mate Jon Nelson, that made up the required four. The event was to be held in the beautiful island of Mali Losinj, off the coast of Croatia – hard to get to, but worth the trek.

There was quite a bit of uncertainty over the exact composition of the England squad until quite near the start, but it turned out that the intended 16 players (four teams of four) became 15 (three teams of five), so our team was strengthened by the arrival of Andy Lewis, and a couple of the Over-65s joined England in the Over-50s instead. Having a team of five obviously gives greater flexibility and the chance for the odd day off, but given that the event was quite small and with an odd number of teams, there was the likelihood of being stalked by the bye as the tournament went on, so reducing further the amount of chess being played, which wasn't ideal for any of us.

As it turned out, England II were reduced back to four almost immediately after Petra Nunn slipped on rocks within hours of arriving. What at first seemed like a painful inconvenience turned into something much more serious and Petra spent a week in hospital before finally being released and eventually catching the same return flight she was due to be on anyway. It was good to see her, with husband John, in good spirits, despite what must have been a very worrying time and we wish her all the best for a speedy recovery.

So, on to the chess. There were 13 teams in the Over-50s, making for some interesting pairings given that it was a nine round event. England I were seeded fifth and England II were thirteenth, meaning that they got the bye in the first round. In the Over-65s, England were seeded seventh out of 16. In both tournaments, Russia were top seeds, clearly ahead of everyone else in the Over-65s, but with home team Croatia close behind in the Over-50s, both teams comprising solely GMs. I'll describe the Over-50s first.

In the first round, while England II had a day off (perhaps a good thing given the worry over Petra), England I made quite hard work of beating Spain. Andy Lewis didn't play and an early win from Jon was cancelled out by Dave trying too hard to avoid a draw. Both Steve's game and mine could have been tricky, but my opponent didn't create enough chances with a queen for my two rooks and Steve's opponent also went astray in a really messy position.

J.Lopez de Turiso-S.Ledger
Spain vs England I

Having just finished my game, I came over to see this position and really wasn't sure what was happening. Steve had been an exchange up earlier for not very much, so clearly it had got at least a little tricky.

43 ♘f6?

43 f5! is the way to go, after which it is Black that needs to find some accurate moves to draw. The computer suggests 43...♖d5 44 f6 ♖f5+ 45 ♔g4 ♖e5 46 f7 ♖xe4+ 47 ♔f3 ♖xe6 48 f8♕ ♖xa6, with White forcing a perpetual.

43...♔b7 44 ♖a3

44 ♖a5 is a better try as 44...♔b6 only draws since the king is on squares that can be checked by the knight. Instead, if Black plays 44...b4 he should still win, but it is clearly more complicated with the rook being more active: 45 e7 ♖h8 46 e8♕ ♖xe8 47 ♘xe8 bxc3 48 ♘d6+ ♔b8! seems to be decisive.

44...b4 45 cxb4 c3 46 e7 ♖h8 47 e8♕ ♖xe8 48 ♘xe8 c2 49 ♖c3 a1♕ 50 ♘d6+ ♔b6 0-1

The next day England I were up against the GMs of Croatia and only Jon offered much resistance against the legendary Bojan Kurajica, still active and strong at the age of 72.

B.Kurajica-J.Nelson
Croatia vs England I

24...e4!?

Not quite sound, but it certainly livens things up. White immediately goes wrong.

25 ♕e3?

25 ♕f4 is critical, hitting the rook on h6.

25...♕xe3 26 fxe3 ♗xc3 27 cxb7 ♔xb7 28 bxc3 ♖xc3

With an extra pawn and an initiative, Black should be close to winning, but these wily old GMs are hard to put away.

29 ♖f2 ♖c7

29...d5 30 ♖xf7+ ♔b6 is much better, when Black's pieces look ideally placed.

30 ♗b5 ♖g6 31 h4 ♖g3 32 ♖e2 ♖g6

I guess this may have been a tacit draw offer as White can (and probably should) go back to f2.

33 ♔b2 ♖c5 34 ♖f2 f5 35 ♗e8 ♖g3 36 ♖xd6 ♖xe3 37 ♗xh5 ♖ec3 38 ♗d1 e3 39 ♖g2 f4

Jon Nelson (front left) had the legendary Bojan Kurajica in some trouble and is here seen in action against Austria, watched by Dave Ledger with Andrews, Lewis and Ledger, further along.

This looks threatening, but actually it could be Black who is in danger here, as the h-pawn is hard to stop while Black's pawns are hard to advance.

40 ♖f6 ♖3c4 41 h5 ♖c7 42 h6 e2!

Just in time, Jon finds a way to simplify into a drawn ending.

43 ♖xe2 ♘d5 44 ♖d6 ♘c3 45 ♖e1 ♘xd1+ 46 ♖exd1 ♖xc2+ 47 ♔b1 ♖h2 48 ♖f6 f3 49 ♖f1 ♖h7 ½-½

England II began their campaign against Spain, going down 3-1, with Sheila Jackson winning on top board with a nice tactic.

J.Ponce Navalon-S.Jackson
Spain vs England II

23 ♘a2?! ♘xe4!

Black is doing well anyway, but this is a real bolt from the blue, based on the weakness of the white back rank.

24 ♕xe4 ♖d1+ 25 ♘e1 ♕xc2 26 ♖e3 ♕xa2 27 ♕xb7 ♕xa4 28 ♔f1 ♕b5+ 29 ♕xb5 axb5

And the extra black pawns proved more than enough:

30 ♖b3 e4 31 ♔e2 ♖c1 32 ♖b2 ♖c4 33 ♘c2 h5 34 ♔d1 f5 35 ♘a3 ♖xb4 36 ♖xb4 ♗xb4 37 ♘xb5 ♔f7 38 ♔e2 ♗c5 39 ♘c3 ♗d4 40 ♘b1 ♔f6 41 ♘d2 ♗c3 42 ♘c4 g5 43 h3 ♗d4 44 ♔f1 ♔e7 45 g4 hxg4 46 hxg4 ♔d7 47 ♔e2 ♔c6 48 ♘d2 ♔d5 49 f3 exf3+ 50 ♔xf3 ♗c3 51 ♘b3 f4 52 ♔e2 e5 53 ♔d3 ♗b4 0-1

Round 3 saw what could have been the decider of the whole event with Russia playing Croatia. Perhaps fortunately for the tournament, the match ended up 2-2, with Zdenko Kozul having to win the following position against Vladimir Burmakin to cancel out Ruslan Scherbakov's win against Kurajica.

V.Burmakin-Z.Kozul
Russia vs Croatia

This was the position I saw when I came to have a look after I had finished. I assumed Burmakin would hold for Russia to win the match, but he goes wrong.

41 ♘a7 ♗d4 42 ♖d2?

A blunder. Black is only a little better after 42 ♕c2.

42...♖e8 43 ♕f1 c4

43...h4 seems more to the point when all of Black's pieces are attacking the white king.

44 ♘b5 ♗c3?!

Again, simply 44...♗c5 followed by ...h4 is really strong, whereas now White is almost back in the game.

45 ♖e2 ♖xe2 46 ♕xe2 cxb3 47 ♕e3 ♗b4 48 ♕xb3 ♗c5 49 ♕c2 ♕a1+ 50 ♔h2 ♕e5 51 ♘c3?

Making it easy for Black.

51...♗xf2 52 ♘e4 ♗xg3+ 0-1

While this was going on, England I lost disappointingly to Austria, with both Andrews mucking up decent positions on the top two boards and England II, outrated fairly heavily, lost to the other Austrian team. Our two losses in a row meant that the bye caught up with us and we had a day off, not completely unwelcome as it was a very nice day and the prospect of going for a swim and then heading into town to sample the local beer wasn't too painful.

England II fought hard against the German women's team, with Peter Wood's win as Black on three getting them a well-deserved draw, although it could have even better if Majid Mashayekh had spotted a win on board two after his opponent blundered. Meanwhile, Russia and Croatia started about their mission to beat everyone else and try to boost their tie-break.

A rested England I came back to beat England II 4-0 in round 5, before overcoming Ireland fairly comfortably in round 6. My game was a textbook example of an attack against the Benoni.

A.Ledger-P.Wallace
England I vs Ireland

20 e5!

This is a typical sacrificial breakthrough against a Benoni set-up and here is an especially good version as Black's queenside counterplay is yet to appear, his kingside is weakened and all of White's pieces are poised to attack.

20...dxe5 21 f5 gxf5 22 ♗xf5 ♘hf6 23 ♘fe4 b5 24 ♕e2 bxa4

24...b4 25 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 26 ♕xh5 is just as grim, as Black has no time to create any counterthreats, and 24...♖b6 25 a5 is another nice point and why I didn't exchange on b5 first – the rook is driven away from its defensive role.

25 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 26 ♕xh5 ♕e7 27 ♘g5 ♘f6 28 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 29 ♕h7+ ♔f8 30 ♘ce4 ♖b5 31 d6 1-0

England II struggled against Norway, with Sheila Jackson again bringing home the only point. Waiting for the pairings for round 7, England I had assumed we had done enough to bring us the juicy pairing against Russia – as we were the highest-placed team not to have played them. But, presumably this would have made the other pairings impossible as we were instead paired down against the German women's team, while England II had an equally surprising pairing, up-floating even further than England I were floated down to play the very strong Czech Republic team (GM and 3 IMs, resting their GM on top board). This was the day I didn't play and fortunately a nice sunny one, so I went for a swim in the sea before settling down to watch the matches unfold.

Early on, Steve was doing well for England I (for once his Trompowsky getting a decent position – as his brother, I'm allowed to write that sort of thing), with the other games pretty level. As well as watching the English teams, it was fascinating to watch the GMs for Russia and Croatia going about their business – much more instructive than watching 2700s reeling off their preparation against one another. As it turned out, both teams again won 4-0.

Meanwhile, in the England games, things turned bad for England II and they were soon lost on 2, 3 and 4, with Sheila Jackson putting up the most resistance, eventually holding with impressive tenacity against her IM opponent. England I meanwhile won 3-1, with a nice win from Andy on 1 and Steve eventually prevailing on 4. Jon agreed a draw in a winning position to guarantee the match as it had looked for some time as if Dave might not be able to hold after losing a pawn early on.

Finally, our date with Russia arrived: Gleizerov, Scherbakov, Yakovich and Ibragimov (resting Burmakin on top board, although he was actually their lowest-rated squad member). Jon did his best to create some early confusion, sacrificing against Ibragimov, but unfortunately his illustrious opponent found all the right defensive ideas. Meanwhile Dave and Andy were both ground down with White, leaving me to eventually hold against Gleizerov.

I found it quite amusing that before this event, I had been doing some coaching with the ECF Academy, including sessions on queen endings and pawn endings – sure enough this game got to a queen ending and then a pawn ending. Playing on increment, I first thought I was winning, then losing and then found a drawing line – good material for a future Academy weekend. The star performance of the day though was Julie Denning, drawing with an opponent rated nearly 600 points higher and with Black to avoid the whitewash for England II.

In the final round, there was some initial confusion when the pairings first went up, showing that the top two teams were playing the bottom two (England II and Norway). Following some complaints from Croatia, who needed to be able to improve their tie-break compared to Russia, some new pairings emerged. England II, not surprisingly, had an easier pairing and scored one and a half points against a pretty strong Croatia II side, with a notable win from Majid on board 2 against his 2200+ opponent. England I were paired with the Czech team. Jon had chances to hold on board 3 against a GM opponent, but unfortunately forgot about the clock and lost on time, while Steve also went down on 4. Andy Lewis lost, and at first glance it looked like a smooth performance by White, but Andy missed an incredible opportunity.

The all-England derby in Mali Losinj. Nearest the camera IM Andrew Ledger would go on to grind down WGM Sheila Jackson, while Andrew Lewis defeated Majid Mashayekh on board 2.

Notes by Andrew Lewis

V.Priehoda-A.Lewis
Czech Republic vs England I

Black is about to launch a powerful kingside attack. Should White try to slow it down or proceed with his own queenside initiative?

20 a5! g4!

Black must respond in kind. Instead, both 20...bxa5 21 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 22 ♗xa5 ♘g6 23 c5 g4 24 ♘xd6 and 20...c6!? (21 dxc6 ♘xc6 22 axb6 ♖xa1 23 ♕xa1 ♕xb6+ 24 ♗f2 ♕b8 25 ♖b1 lead to a complicated position in which White's central or queenside break-through is coming ahead of Black's attack.

21 axb6!

Seemingly winning the important pawn on c7 after the forced (21...gxf3? 22 ♗xf3 ♖xa1 23 ♕xa1 cxb6 24 ♘xf4 wins)...

21...♖xa1

...Due to the apparently devastating intermezzo:

22 bxc7?!

Black now has an amazing resource to keep him in the game (22 ♕xa1! cxb6 23 ♘xf4 would have won). If you can find this yourself, you are probably a chess computer! In the game, Black now tried a desperado attack:

22...♕e8? 23 ♕xa1 g3?! 24 hxg3 fxg3 25 f4!

Black cannot even get in a mate threat with ...♕h5 and resigned two moves later.

Instead, 22...♕xc7? fails to 23 ♕xa1 ♕xc4 24 ♘xf4 ♕b3 25 ♗c3, but did you spot 22...gxf3!!, and if 23 cxd8♕ (both capturing a queen and making a new queen, which creates a net imbalance of two queens – how can such a move fail to terminate the game?; instead, 23 ♗xf3 ♕xc7 24 ♘xc7 ♖xd1 25 ♗xd1 ♘f5! 26 exf5 ♖xc7 slightly

favours Black) 23...♖xg2+ 24 ♔h1 fxe2 25 ♕xe2 ♖xe2?

After a bizarre tactical sequence, White has emerged with a small material advantage (queen against rook and bishop), which is fully compensated for by the activity of the black pieces, especially the invading rooks. One representative line is: 26 ♘xd6 ♗h3 27 ♖g1+ ♘g4 28 ♗f2 ♖xg1+ 29 ♔xg1 (and not 29 ♗xg1?? ♗g2#) 29...♘xf2 30 ♕e8 (if 30 ♘xf2?? ♖e1#) 30...♘g6 31 ♕f7+ (side-stepping 31 ♘xe5?? ♘xe5 32 ♕xe5 ♘xe4 33 ♘xe4 ♗c5+ 34 ♔h1 ♖e1#) 31...♔h8 32 ♘xe5 ♗xd6 33 ♕f6+ ♔g8 34 ♕f7+ with a draw by perpetual check.

♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘

So, for the second day in a row, it was down to me to get us on the board and I played my best game to win nicely against my GM opponent.

A.Ledger-P.Blatny
England I vs Czech Republic
Owen's Defence

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♗b7 3 ♗d3 e6 4 ♘f3 d6 5 0-0 ♘d7 6 ♖e1 g6 7 ♘bd2 ♗g7 8 ♘f1 ♘e7 9 c3 h6 10 ♘g3 a6

Blatny plays this Hippo set-up quite a lot. At first it seems a decent idea as Black can variously think about ideas with any of ...b5, ...c5, ...d5, ...e5, ...f5 or even ...g5, but White is well placed to deal with any of these and seems to be simply better.

11 a4 c5 12 ♗e3 ♕c7 13 ♕e2 e5 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 ♖ed1

It's getting awkward for Black as it is hard to contest the d-file.

15...♘f6

15...0-0 16 ♕d2 ♔h7 17 ♗xa6 wins a pawn.

16 b4 0-0 17 a5 c4?!

Understandably, Black wants some activity in what has become a difficult position, but this doesn't really help.

18 ♗xc4 bxa5 19 ♗c5 ♖fc8 20 ♖xa5 ♘c6 21 ♖aa1 ♘b8 22 ♗a2 ♘e8 23 ♕c4 a5 24 h4

I was pleased with this at the time, opening up another line of attack, but 24 b5 is much better as Black can hardly move.

24...♘a6 25 h5 g5 26 ♘f5 ♘xc5 27 bxc5 ♗a6 28 ♕a4 ♕xc5 29 ♗d5

29 ♗xf7+ works here, but only if I spot the follow-up: 29...♔xf7 30 ♘xh6+! ♗xh6 31 ♕d7+ and White wins.

29...♗b5 30 ♕a2 ♖a7 31 ♖ab1 ♘f6

32 ♗xf7+!

Better late than never.

32...♖xf7 33 ♖xb5 ♕f8

After 33...♕xb5 34 ♘d6 everything is falling apart for Black, and 34...♕d7 35 ♘xe5 only brings more resources into the attack.

34 ♘xe5 ♘xe4 35 ♘xf7 ♘xc3 36 ♘7xh6+ ♔h7 37 ♕e6 ♕e8 38 ♕g6+ ♕xg6 39 hxg6+ ♔xg6 40 ♖b6+ ♗f6 41 ♘e7+ 1-0

This was certainly a nice finish to the event for me, but by losing the match we finished level fifth overall. England II finished exactly where they were seeded, but this wasn't surprising given that they were heavily outrated in every game and had no options to change their line-up. Sheila Jackson did particularly well on top board to gain 18 rating points.

The tie-break rules seemed quite complicated, but Russia ended up winning despite Scherbakov dropping a draw to Anthony Fox of Ireland (who had a good event, with all five of their squad gaining rating points), while Croatia won 4-0 against Spain.

I didn't see as much of the Over-65 event, but certainly whenever I looked, Russia were winning comfortably, eventually winning all 9 matches with their squad of three GMs and two IMs. Behind them it was quite close, with Sweden I and Germany getting the silver and bronze medals respectively. England I finished sixth, higher than their seeding, winning five and losing four. All of the England II team scored at least half marks, but the star of the show was undoubtedly John Quinn, scoring 5/7 and gaining more than 50 rating points. He was the lucky recipient of a blunder in the ending from Balashov (one of only two games lost by Russia in the whole event), but played some really good chess too.

J.Quinn-H.Singer
England I vs Austria

17 ♗b5

In a position that, at first, looks fairly level, John spots his chance to cause problems against his higher-rated opponent based on the d-file.

17...♖f8 18 ♗c4! ♘g4?! 19 fxg4 ♗xh4 20 ♗xd5 ♕c8 21 ♘e4 ♗xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♕b7 23 ♖fd1 ♖ad8 24 ♘2c3 ♖xd5 25 ♘xd5 f5?! Black was struggling anyway, but this makes matters much worse.

26 ♘d6 ♕c6 27 gxf5 ♕xd6 28 ♘f6+ 1-0

As a result of his excellent score, John won the silver medal for board 1, behind GM Rantanen of Finland, but ahead of Balashov and 3 IMs. Not all teams had a reserve board, but among those that did, Brian Ewart also won a silver medal – and on his birthday too. Similarly in the Over-50s, Steve managed to get bronze for the reserve board.

Overall, it was a very enjoyable event, held in excellent conditions in a beautiful location, but it was also quite expensive and not that easy to get to. I would certainly play a senior team tournament again, but I don't think I'm ready to segregate myself from the under-50 chess playing world just yet!

Stunning Blows

James Plaskett witnessed a couple of very impressive moves at the World Senior Team Championship, where England had hoped to challenge the USA for Gold

The 2019 World Senior Teams Championship was held on the Greek island of Rhodes back in April and in a hall of the seaside Olympic Palace Hotel that granted us a view of the Turkish coastline just 40 kilometres distant. I would sometimes gaze out on that, reminded of the condominium status of the not too distant Mediterranean isle of my own birth: Cyprus. The event followed straight on from an individual European Championship for seniors held at the same venue, so there were plenty of officials, arbiters, sets and analysis boards to hand – and some players!

England's star performer was John Emms, who turned in some outstanding victories before, sadly, missing an easy win in the final round and capturing a white piece on c6 not with his bishop from h1, but with another unit, thereby permitting his opponent a perpetual check.

What ought to have been the big match was our clash with the USA. Here are two games from it.

A.Yermolinsky-J.Plaskett
USA vs England I
Benko Gambit

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5
A few years since I essayed this.
4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 ♗xa6 6 ♘c3 d6 7 e4 ♗xf1 8 ♔xf1 g6 9 ♘f3 ♗g7 10 g3 0-0 11 ♔g2
Miles once wrote, "I gave up the Benko Gambit because it loses a pawn." Quite.
11...♕b6
Something of a variance. 11...♘bd7 being more usual.

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12 ♖e1 ♘bd7 13 h3
Shutting out ...♘g4-e5 manoeuvres.
13...♖fb8
And the team have taken up their appointed slots.
14 ♖e2 ♕a6 15 ♗g5

It all got rather turgid in Piket-Topalov, Monaco (rapid) 1997, after 15 ♕e1!? ♘e8 (15...♘b6 was an option) 16 ♗f4 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 f6 18 a4 ♘e5 19 ♗xe5 dxe5 and was eventually drawn.
15...♖b4
I thought 15...h6 something of a weakening here and so eschewed it, but had I known of the games Hjartarson-Alburt, Reykjavik 1986, and Gurevich-Koch, European Team Championship, Haifa 1989, I would have played it.

Each saw 16 ♗e3 ♘b6, whereupon Mikhail Gurevich's 17 b3 was met with 17...♘f6xd5! when the white pieces trip over each others' feet. After 18 exd5 ♗xc3 19 ♗xh6 ♘xd5! 20 ♖c1 ♗f6 Koch stood better in the centre and on the queenside, and missed several easy wins before they agreed it drawn at move 34.

Hjartarson took care of the problems on the long diagonal by 17 ♖c1, but it made him cede his bishop and a quite splendid battle developed by 17...♘c4 18 b3 ♘xe3+ 19 ♖xe3 ♘d7 20 a4 c4! 21 ♘b5 cxb3 22 ♘c7 ♕xa4 23 ♘xa8 ♘c5 24 ♖xc5?! dxc5 25 ♘c7 c4 26 e5 ♕a5 28 d6 b2 29 ♕b1 c3 30 e6 fxe6 31 ♖e1 exd6, whereupon it was Psakhis' pawns that were to win it for him in 51 moves.

I simply underestimated the reaction of ...♘xd5 to White's projected e4-e5 advance.
16 a3 ♖b7 17 ♖c1 ♘c4 18 ♖cc2 ♘c4 19 e5
Action. Yermo conceded that he just didn't want the position to drift into one where the Benko pressurises his queenside.
19...♘d7 20 exd6
A spectating Jaan Ehlvest thought 20 e6 preferable, but that's another world and one which I was not too concerned to enter.
20...exd6 21 ♗c1 Tidying.
21...♘de5 22 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 23 ♗f4

And we reach something by way of the game's first critical point. Here I had a long think, and not just concerning concrete variations. There were also considerations such as 'Do I have the right, even, in this sort of 'classic' Benko formation, to look for a plus?'. The opened e-file has altered things quite a bit.
23...h6?!
Obviously the critical line was 23...♘d3 24 ♗xd6 ♘xb2 25 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 26 ♖xb2 ♕xd6. I guess here something like 27 ♘b5 ♕d7 28 ♖b1 c4 is far from implausible, when I rather fancy Black's chances of holding. But, like I said, I wasn't at all certain whether I ought to be content with just 'holding'.
24 ♘e4! ♘d3 25 ♗xd6 ♘xb2
Well, this much I saw, but not...
26 ♕h1!!

He didn't take all that long over the move and told me afterwards that he couldn't recall ever producing one like it. Ever. The snag is that now 26...♘d3 meets with 27 ♘xc5 ♕xd6 28 ♘xb7 ♕xd5+ 29 ♔h2.

26...c4 27 ♔h2 ♘d3 28 ♘c5 ♘xc5 29 ♗xc5

Tenable now? Maybe, but it's not easy at all.

29...♖c8 30 ♗b4 c3

30...♗f8 may have proved tougher.

31 ♕e4 ♔h7 32 d6 ♖d7 33 ♕d5 ♗f6?

33...♖cd8 keeps Black alive.

34 ♖e7!

Ouch.

34...♖xe7 35 dxe7 ♔g7

On 35...♕e6 37 ♕f3 ♗xe7 38 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 39 ♗xc3 there are very few technical headaches ahead for White, as 39...♗xa3? loses to 40 ♕a8.

36 ♖xc3 ♖e8 37 ♖f3 ♕e2 38 ♗c3 1-0

Shabalov had turned in a monster performance in Dresden in 2018 on board 1 for the United States, but he did drop a half point there to Spess. Upon passing that game, circa move 23, I took Candidate GM Robert Bellin aside and, without analysing any variation nor suggesting who stood better, said that the situation on the board could only have arisen from a game of Speelman's. He glanced across...and concurred. In Rhodes these two warriors would cross swords again.

J.Speelman-A.Shabalov
England vs USA
Catalan Opening

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 ♗e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 dxc4 7 ♕c2 b6!?

The Bukavshin line, thus dubbed after a Russian GM who tragically died in 2016. This received more than one outing on Rhodes. The older 7...a6 8 ♕xc4 b5 does create something by way of a soft spot, if not yet a hole, at c5. Taking on c4 is now quite viable, but instead Spess "adventured" by:

8 ♘g5 c6

Still there is 9 ♕xc4, which now legitimately gambits after 9...♗a6 10 ♕c2 ♕xd4. Think I'd take the pawn and also Black then.

9 ♖d1 ♗a6

The gold-medal winning U.S. over-50 team in action (with England visible in the distance). Nearest the camera, Alexander Shabalov has black, while Joel Benjamin prepares to move.

To my mind hanging on to it is the only consistent play. There is the precedent of 9...h6 10 ♘e4 ♘xe4 11 ♗xe4 ♗b7 12 ♕xc4 ♘d7 and in Jumabayev-Repka, Batumi Olympiad 2018, Black relieved his squeeze by rapid queenside expansion with ...♕c8 and ...b5-b4. This didn't work out so badly, but he still lost.

Nobody has tried 9...b5 yet, although hanging on to the gambitted c-pawn in such manner is far from unknown in the Catalan.

10 ♘d2

Consistent, for now 10...♕xd4 fails to 11 ♘de4 and the win of material. Can't say I like 10 a4 so much. It stops the cementing of c4 with...b5, but cedes Black a healthy outpost – perhaps for a knight – at b4.

10...h6 11 ♘ge4

Shabalov told me he was expecting the retreat to f3, and I have to say that to me also looks the superior choice.

11...♘xe4

11...♕xd4 probably leaves Black not in a state of advantage following 12 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 13 ♘xc4.

12 ♗xe4

12 ♘xe4 was a viable option, but our man may have wanted to train his horse at c4.

12...c3?!

"Take everything you are offered", was Bobby's motto, and here simply grabbing the d4-pawn with 12...♕xd4 to counter 13 ♘f3 with 13...♕c5 14 ♗e3 ♕h5 leaves Black on top. Shabba thought that a bit too "inconsiderate" of his other team members, though.

13 ♘f3

13 bxc3 ♗xe2 14 ♖e1 ♗a6 15 ♗b2 or 15 a4 would have left White with something by way of a similar degree of compensation, it seems to me.

13...cxb2 14 ♗xb2 ♘d7!?

Not a bad move, but keeping the material via 14...♗b7 or even the 'uglier' 14...f5 15 ♗d3 ♕d5 were possibilities.

15 ♗xc6!

Sound. But based on a major miscalculation.

15...♖c8 16 d5

On 16 e4, of course, there comes 16...♘b8 and after 17 d5, not too surprisingly, the active

bishop-pair enable Black to hold the balance: for instance, 17...♘xc6 18 dxc6 ♕e8 19 ♘e5 ♗b5 20 ♖ac1 ♗c5! 21 ♘d7 ♗xc6 22 ♘xf8 ♗a4 or here 22 ♕c3 e5! 23 ♘xf8 ♗a4 and Black's several tricks leave White with nothing better than 24 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 25 ♗xe5 ♗xd1 26 ♖xd1 ♔xf8 27 ♖d7 a5 and equality.

16...exd5 17 ♖xd5

The computeresque 17 e4 allows Black to reorganise satisfactorily via 17...♘c5 18 ♗xd5 ♕e8!.

17...♕c7

Spess had thought 18 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 19 ♕c3 to be winning – until he saw 19...♕g4!. This proves Dvoretsky's observation that, in sharp positions, the outcome not uncommonly may hinge on just one move. So Jon had to come up with the still satisfactory:

18 ♖c1

Now 18...♘f6 19 ♖f5 would have left it all about balanced, but, naturally enough, Shabba played the more active

18...♘c5!?

A disoriented Speelman now, quite uncharacteristically, lost the thread. Shabalov thought White could now hold the balance by 19 ♗d7 ♖cd8 20 ♖cd1. Certainly that would have been superior to what he played, although even there I think Black may be a little better after 20...♕b7. But Spess blundered.

19 ♖e5?

This loses material.

19...♗f6 20 ♗d5 ♕d7

Taking the rook would also have worked.

21 ♕d2 ♘d3!

Shattering.

22 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 23 exd3 ♗xe5 24 ♗c4

A last hope. **24...♗xc4 25 ♘xe5 ♕d6!**

25...♕d5 would have permitted the fiendish 26 ♕c3 ♗a6 27 ♘c6!.

26 ♘xc4 ♖xc4 27 ♕e2 ♖c7 28 ♕e8+ ♔h7 0-1

Shabba's disruptive and quite unexpected 21...♘d3!, in a situation where White thought himself to be "going forward", triggered a memory of the only similar shot of my life.

That was against my fellow team member Keith Arkell back at Hastings 1997.

K.Arkell-J.Plaskett
Hastings 1996/97

Keith threatened my kingside by **30 ♗e4** whereupon I played **30...♘d3!** and went on to win.

Kasparov also instructed me on how in his immortal victory in the 1985 match with Karpov, which made Garry world champion, one which he dubbed his "supreme creative achievement", his own black knight at d3, supported there by a light-squared bishop, constituted a paralysing tandem worth more than the pawn he sacrificed to get it there.

But I wasn't 100% convinced, and remain so. There were other salient features of that game, including the restrictive effects of the queenside pawns at b5 and a6 and the loss of time Anatoly suffered in transferring his king's knight so early on to the daft a3-square. But what did register was Kasparov's observation that "It is possible to trade material for time and quality". Although nobody has yet pinned down the ethereal nature of 'quality'.

Back on Rhodes, as they had done at Dresden in 2018, the USA had won and we, England I, who had that time won our individual match but finished in second place, this time came sixth.

Joel Benjamin (second left) enjoys the moment as he receives a gold medal alongside his team-mates (from left-right): Alexander Shabalov, Igor Novikov, Jaan Ehlvest and Alex Yermolinsky.

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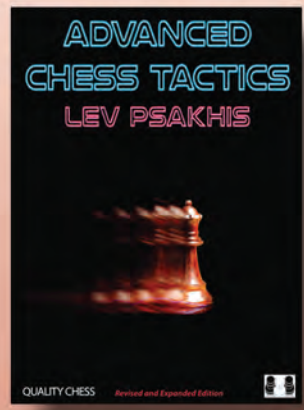

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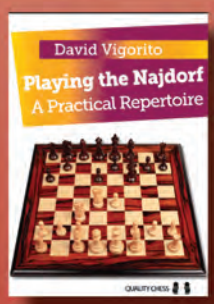

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Coming December 2019

Chess is Coming Home... to Newcastle!

For its second reborn edition, the Northumbria Masters left the famous Chillingham Arms to move to a bigger venue – remaining a major hit. Tim Wall reports

"I'm coming home, Newcastle,
Ye can keep yer London wine,
I'd walk the streets all day all neet,
For a bottle o' the River Tyne.
I'm coming home, Newcastle,
I wish I'd never been away,
I'd kiss the ground for the welcome sound,
Of me mother saying, 'Hinny, howay!'"

***Home Newcastle* by Ronnie Lambert**

Players at the 1996 Northumbria Masters, held at The Chillingham Arms, Newcastle. (Front row, from left): 4NCL founder Chris Dunworth, Charlie Storey, a very young Gawain Jones, and J. Joseph Young; (Back row, from left): Jonathan King, Chris Ray, Tim Wall.

As a junior chess player in the North East of England in the recession-era 1980s, first on Teesside and then in Newcastle upon Tyne, I quickly got used to the idea that to play in big tournaments, you had to travel to London, far-flung seaside resorts or other places mostly in the south of England. Events such as the Lloyds Bank Masters were all expensive away fixtures, and the epicentre of UK chess seemed a long way away.

Almost in desperation, I started organising international tournaments in Newcastle in the mid-1990s. I felt that, while we didn't have the strongest players in the world, we could at least 'bring coals to Newcastle' and help young local players to get the chances they were lacking.

Sense of Camaraderie

I started with my local pub, The Chillingham Arms, asking the manager after a boozy quiz night whether we could hold a chess event in his upstairs function room. Much to my surprise, the room hire was just £10 a day, and a series of great tournaments took place. To say they were run on a shoestring would have been a big understatement, as they were literally organised from entry fees and the odd helpful donation from The Friends of Chess and then BCF International Director David Sedgwick's budget.

The titled players (and pretty much a majority of the other players, as I vaguely recall) simply stayed in local players' homes. Among the future stars staying in mine and my friends' spare rooms, on sofas and even on floors in sleeping bags, were such luminaries in the making as Jacob Aagaard, John Shaw and Danny Gormally.

Lara Barnes, now the ECF Chief Arbiter, was cutting her teeth in her first tournaments as an arbiter, and among the youngsters playing their first international tournaments were a certain future British champion, Gawain Jones, then aged 9, and Indian superstar commentator Tania Sachdev, then aged 10.

It is the most horrible cliché, but it was true to say, as the Monty Python 'Four Yorkshiremen' sketch put it, "We were poor, but we were happy." A number of players made their first IM norms, including Danny Gormally and even myself – how I managed that while also organising a tournament is a complete mystery to me.

The events, some all-play-alls, some Swisses, were a bit rough and ready, but they were great fun. Not to toot my own horn too much, but even today everyone I speak to remembers those events with great affection. It was not just the chess, but the camaraderie, the atmosphere and the feeling that we were all mucking in together.

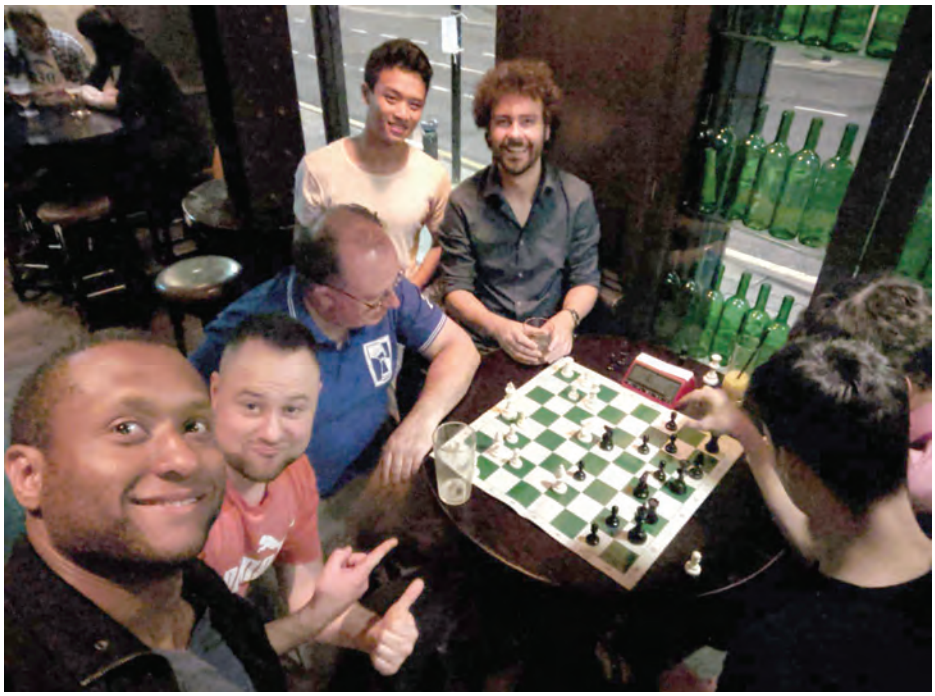
Kevin Keegan & The Sniper

One occasion that particularly sticks in my memory was over Easter 1996, when future 'Sniper Master' Charlie Storey was trying to win some long endgame upstairs in the pub, while downstairs in the bar what seemed like hundreds of Newcastle United supporters were roaring as the Premier League title literally slipped from their grasp, and ill-fated manager Kevin Keegan uttered his immortal "I would love it if we beat them..." rant against Manchester United's Alex Ferguson.

We chessplayers oscillated between watching the epic football match downstairs, and Charlie's heroic attempts to win his endgame upstairs...

My Years in Exile

Then, six months later, my time in Newcastle came to an abrupt halt, as I was lured away down south to London to work for Murray Chandler's *British Chess Magazine*. Three years later – somewhat bizarrely – I went further afield to the great chess nations Azerbaijan and Russia, where I became a mainstream media journalist and editor. Ironically, in the great chess cities of Baku and Moscow, due to my work schedule I had little time for the game – despite in 1999 interviewing a 12-year-old Teimour Radjabov, and once enduring an epic, all-night vodka



GMs Justin Tan and Roeland Pruijssers (centre left and centre right) enjoying an evening of 'Hand & Brain' blitz with local club players Jose Grueso (far left) and Asa Bayram (second left) in the centre of Newcastle after the last round of the 2019 Northumbria Masters.

drinking marathon with Russian Grandmasters at the 2014 Sochi world championship match.

Some 20 years later, like the Geordie expat brickies from the classic TV series *Auf Wiedersehn, Pet*, it was finally time for me to 'Come home, Newcastle' in 2016. Much as I had enjoyed an interesting and mostly fulfilling career working abroad, it was a highly emotional change in my life.

The feelings that I experienced, as an economic migrant 'exiled' from the North East, have of course been experienced by many millions elsewhere, but there is nothing like returning home – and finding, like Michael Caine in the classic 1971 Newcastle noir gangster film *Get Carter*, that so much of that old world had gone forever, even while some of the old places and faces remained the same. Except I and my Newcastle friends were just much, much older. Almost like, as in the words of the 'Coming Home' song, "Ah might as well ha' been in jail..."

Putting the Band Back Together

About a year after I'd come back to Newcastle, it was none other than Charlie Storey who suggested in an offhand comment, "Why don't you hold another international tournament?". The seed of an idea of 'putting the band back together again' took root, and I asked the manager of the self-same Chillingham Arms if his upstairs function room was available for a chess event. I was again pleasantly surprised to learn that the room hire was just £25 a day this time... and in February 2018 the reborn Northumbria Masters took place in the pub, with seven GMs and 11 IMs in a strong field of 50 players.

Once again, the event benefited from the great work of Lara Barnes, and this time new sponsors were found, including the Liverpool-based company Capital Bridging Finance Solutions, the ECF, The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, and the Friends of Chess. The budget was far bigger than in the 1990s, but in modern terms it was still an event on a shoestring – and it was only made possible by the efforts of a group of local volunteers, who again put up titled players in their homes and ferried them to and from the tournament each day.

The Big New Venue

This year, the 2019 Northumbria Masters in late August was an altogether grander affair, with a great new venue, Novotel Newcastle Airport, organised in conjunction with Bridge Overseas/Guaranteed Events Ltd. This meant we could expand the number of players to 120 in four different sections, reaching maximum capacity in a large conference suite. The playing conditions were excellent, and all the players could enjoy a full trestle table per board to themselves and their opponent.

Like the 2018 and 1990s events, there was a great diversity in the makeup of the tournaments, with players from 11 different nations taking part. The Masters field of 52 players again was very strong, including a total of six GMs and six IMs. It was particularly pleasing to see some of the 'original band members' from the 1990s Northumbria Masters, GM Danny Gormally and FM Charlie Storey, back in action in the 2019 event.

The top seed, German GM Alexander Donchenko, got off to a flying 3/3 start, sharing the lead with newly titled Australia GM Justin Tan, who is a medical student in Edinburgh. The chasing pack on 2½/3 was led by GMs Roeland Pruijssers (Netherlands), Danny Gormally, Andrei Maksimenko (Ukraine), and Alexander Raetsky (Russia), along with IMs David Eggleston and Stephen Mannion. The surprise player in the score group was England junior Armaan Gogia, who with a FIDE of 1754 was surely the most underrated player in the tournament.

The biggest upset in the early rounds was achieved by Newcastle's 11-year-old Dutch-born wunderkind, Yichen Han, who defeated IM Alan Merry with a wicked swindle in round 2.

A.Merry-Y.Han
Round 2
English Opening

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 f5 4 g3 ♘f6 5 d4 e4 6 ♘h4 d6 7 ♗g5 ♗e7 8 e3 0-0 9 ♘g2 h6 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 h4 ♘e7 12 ♕b3 c6 13 0-0-0 ♔h7

Now Alan Merry turned up the pressure with a powerful kingside onslaught.

14 g4! g6 15 ♘f4 a6 16 ♗e2 b5 17 g5 ♗g7 18 cxb5 axb5 19 h5!

The breakthrough. Already Yichen is in desperate trouble.

19...d5 20 ♖dg1

Piling on the pressure can't be bad. 20 hxg6+ was the Route One approach: 20...♘xg6 21 gxh6 ♗xh6 22 ♖xh6+! ♔xh6 23 ♖h1+ ♘h4 24 ♘g2 with a big advantage.

20...hxg5 21 hxg6+ ♔g8 22 ♖xg5 ♕d6 23 ♕d1

Again, nothing wrong with Merry's way, but 23 ♖h7 was more direct.

23...b4 24 ♘a4 ♗d7 25 ♗f1?

So far, Merry has played an exemplary attacking game. Why he didn't crown it with the thematic 25 ♖h8+! ♗xh8 26 ♕h1 ♘xg6 27 ♖xg6+ ♕xg6 28 ♘xg6 ♗g7 29 ♘xf8, with a simple win, is hard to fathom. One suspects an eagle-eyed junior such as Yichen, brought up on a constant diet of daily tactics and checkmate puzzles, would have played this instantly. Unless Alan thought that all roads led to Rome...

25...♖xa4

The exchange sacrifice is Black's only hope – to distract the white queen and open lines against the white king.

26 ♕xa4 c5 27 ♕d1

27 ♕a6 is the sensible way to win, but presumably Alan was still focused on the g6-pawn wedge mating theme.

27...cxd4 28 ♔b1 d3

Now the rook sacrifice was absolutely vital for White: 29 ♖h8+! ♗xh8 30 ♕h5 ♖f6 31 ♕h7+ ♔f8 32 ♕xh8+ ♘g8 33 ♖g1 and White is still better, despite the irritant of the d3-pawn. But the pedestrian build-up played in the game allows Yichen to turn the tables immediately.

29 ♕h5? ♖c8

The only move, but now White's attack is busted and Black threatens both ...♕f6 and ...♕xb2 mate, as well as simply ...♖c1+, forcing mate.

30 ♗xd3

If 30 ♕h7+ ♔f8 31 ♘h5 ♖c1+ 32 ♔xc1 ♕c5+ and mates.

30...♕f6 31 ♕h7+ ♔f8 32 ♕xg7+

There's nothing else. The rest is sad for Alan, but a great swindle by Yichen.

32...♕xg7 33 ♘h5 ♕h6 34 ♖gg1 ♘g8 35 ♘f6 ♕g7 36 ♘xd7+ ♕xd7 37 ♖h7 ♕c6 38 ♖f7+ ♔e8 39 ♖xf5 exd3 0-1

The middle rounds saw more jockeying for the lead between the GMs. In the fourth round, Donchenko drew with Tan, allowing Pruijssers and Maksimenko to catch up on 3½/4. By the end of round 6, Donchenko and Gormally shared the lead with 5 points.

It was then that the top Dutchman, Roeland Pruijssers, took charge, showing great stamina and energy to finish with three straight wins, winning the tournament with an impressive 7½/9. Despite starting with a draw (an inadvertent Swiss gambit), he was confident and solid throughout, deploying his favourite Dutch Leningrad to notch up wins against Gormally and Raetsky.

Donchenko came close to repeating his triumph at the 2018 Northumbria Masters, where he won with 7/9. This year his score was the same, but this time it was only good enough for equal second. Joining him on '+5' was Alan Merry, who bounced back from his early calamity to score a one-sided win over Gormally in the final round to clinch his prize.

The players in the Masters showed a great fighting spirit, with hardly any quick draws, even among the grandmasters. The event was also marked with a very friendly atmosphere, and this was typified by the impromptu blitz evening that took place after the last round, as Roeland Pruijssers, Alexander Donchenko and Justin Tan headed into Newcastle City Centre, joined by local club players Jose Grueso, Asa Bayram, Jack Erskine-Pereira and myself, and we played often-hilarious games of 'Hand and Brain' until the wee hours in a downtown bar.

The Novotel Newcastle Airport provided a more professional setting for the Northumbria Masters than the upstairs room at the Chillingham Arms, but the social spirit was little dimmed.

The FIDE-rated Challengers (Under 2050/180 ECF) and Major (Under 1825/150 ECF) tournaments were also well supported, with many club players travelling to Newcastle over the Bank Holiday weekend. It was particularly pleasing to see some 30 juniors playing in the 9-round FIDE-rated tournaments, many with the support of bursaries from the John Robinson Trust.

One notable local triumph was that of Alex Brodie, a Forest Hall clubmate of mine, who despite not being active recently in league or congress chess, won the Major unbeaten with the outstanding score of 7/9, despite being one of the lower rated players in the event.

To me, the success of this year's Northumbria Masters showed that it is entirely possible to organise strong and attractive international tournaments in a city a fair way away from London. To quote the baseball film *Field of Dreams*, if you build it, they will come.

A.Donchenko-A.Merry
Round 8
London System

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♗f4 c5 4 e3 ♘c6 5 ♘bd2 ♗g4 6 h3 ♗xf3 7 ♘xf3 e6 8 c3 ♗d6

So far, so normal. Just another boring London System – or is it? Now Donchenko goes pawn hunting at the expense of development. When you and I do this, it's accompanied by pitying annotations, sage tut-tutting and wise shaking of the head. When a 2600+ GM does this, it's described as well-calculated... What follows is a superb battle, in which Alan Merry also shows fine calculation and great ingenuity.

9 ♕b3!? 0-0 10 ♕xb7 ♘a5 11 ♕a6 ♗xf4 12 exf4 c4!

And the door is bolted. Either White's queen will be corralled on a6, or Donchenko must give something back.

13 b4!

If 13 ♗e2?! ♖b8 14 0-0 ♖xb2 15 ♖fe1 ♕c7 and White is in big trouble.

13...cxb3 14 axb3 ♘xb3 15 ♖a3 ♖b8 16 ♗b5

Here is Donchenko's clever idea: Now it is the turn of the black knight to get stuck behind enemy lines...

16...♖b6 17 ♕a4 a6 18 ♗d3

Is it curtains for the knight? Nay, "Tis but a scratch!", as Monty Python would say.

18...♘c1!

Yes, do not adjust your chess set, the knight really is going on manoeuvres... Bizarrely, it is safe enough, because castling by White would allow ...♘e2+, forking some pawns.

19 ♗c2 ♕c7 20 ♘e5 ♖fb8 21 ♕a5

Not 21 ♔d2? ♘b3+! which is terrible for White, as if 22 ♗xb3? ♘e4+! and Black crashes through on c3.

21...♘e4

A second knight joins the fray, but this allows White to free himself with the c3-c4

undermining push. Instead, 21...♕c8 would maintain the Mexican stand-off, simply asking White how he is going to proceed. If 22 0-0 ♘e2+ 23 ♔h2 ♘xf4 and Black is slightly better.

22 ♖a1 ♖c8!

A devilish trap.

23 c4!

Blow for blow. Great fighting chess from both players, and not 23 ♖xc1? ♖b1! when Black wins the house after 24 ♕xc7 ♖xc1+.

23...f6!? 24 c5

Bizarrely, the comp says it's equal now.

24...fxe5

One way to head towards a draw would be 24...♘b3 25 ♗xb3 ♖xb3 26 ♕xa6 fxe5 27 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 (or 27...♔h8 28 ♕xd5 ♕b7 29 ♕xb7 ♖xb7 when White should have enough pawns for the piece) 28 ♕f5+ and it is difficult to see how Black can usefully avoid a perpetual.

25 ♕xb6

Donchenko opts for an ending where Merry will have two knights versus a rook, but White has a big passed pawn. The alternative must also have been very difficult to calculate over the board: 25 ♗xe4 ♘b3 26 cxb6 ♕c4 27 ♕xa6 ♕c3+ 28 ♔f1 ♕xa1+ 29 ♕xa1 ♘xa1 and now White is OK so long as he sacrifices the bishop: 30 ♔e2 ♘b3 31 dxe5 dxe4 32 ♖b1 ♘a5 33 ♔e3 ♘b7 34 ♔xe4 and White's three pawns for the knight are enough.

25...♕xb6 26 cxb6 ♖xc2 27 0–0 ♘e2+ 28 ♔h2 ♘4c3

Controlling the b1-square. If 28...♘xd4? 29 b7 and White should be winning.

29 fxe5 ♖b2 30 ♖xa6 ♘xd4 31 ♖fa1 h5 32 ♖1a3 ♘e4 33 ♖a2

'Let's call it a draw!' Both sides correctly conclude that Black needs his rook to deal with the b6 monster, so a repetition occurs. What an end-to-end struggle!

33...♖b1 34 ♖a1 ♖b2 35 ♖1a2 ♖b1 36 ♖a1 ½-½

D.Gormally-R.Pruijssers
Round 8
Dutch Defence

1 d4 f5 2 ♗g5!?

Tromp-style and described by Roeland Pruijssers and Ginger GM Simon Williams on their 'Double Tuition' Leningrad Dutch DVD as one of the most dangerous White tries.

2...g6

2...h6!? is the aggressive counter-attacking line recommended by Pruijssers and Williams, but it leads to a fair amount of tactical mayhem. After 3 ♗h4 g5 4 e4!? ♘f6 5 e5 e6 6 ♗g3 f4 7 ♗d3 d5! they claim Black is OK, but it is interesting that in a crucial tournament game Pruijssers chooses a less dangerous line.

3 ♘d2 ♗g7 4 e4 fxe4 5 ♘xe4 d5!

This may look anti-positional, but in fact Black is often able to follow up with ...e5 in due course.

6 ♘g3 ♘f6 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 ♗e2 ♘c6 9 c3 ♕d6 10 h3?!

A couple of weeks after the Northumbria Masters, I had this line as Black against Danny Gormally in the UK Blitz regional heat in Newcastle. He explained after winning that game 10 h3 was not strictly necessary, and he felt that simply 10 0-0 would give White an edge.

10...♘d7!

Ensuring that Black will achieve the ...e5 break comfortably.

11 0-0 e5 12 dxe5 ♘dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♕d2 b6 15 ♗h6 ♗xh6 16 ♕xh6 ♗b7 17 ♖ad1 ♕f6 18 ♕d2 ♕f4 19 ♕xf4 ♖xf4

Without queens only Black can be better in the long run, due to his queenside pawn majority.

20 ♖fe1 ♖e8 21 ♗f1 ♔f8 22 ♖e3 ♘f7 23 c4 dxc4 24 ♖d7

Going active should be enough for Gormally to hold the balance, but not more. Before this game he was level with Pruijssers, Donchenko, Merry and David Eggleston on 5½/7, but over the next few moves he overpresses and goes wrong.

24...♘d6 25 ♖xh7?!

25 ♖xe8+ first, before taking the h-pawn, would have avoided an isolated e-pawn. Even though it is passed, the e3-pawn is never a danger to Black.

25...♖xe3 26 fxe3 ♖f7 27 ♖h4 b5 28 b3 ♗d5 29 e4?!

This appears to be a miscalculation. Now Pruijjsers wins a pawn, and while initially Gormally has compensation, he fails to hold in the end:

29...cxb3! 30 axb3 ♗xb3 31 e5 ♘c4 32 ♘e4 ♘xe5 33 ♗xb5 ♔e7 34 ♘d2 ♗c2 35 ♘c4 ♔f6 36 ♘e3 ♗d3 37 ♘g4+ ♘xg4 38 ♗xd3 ♘e5 39 ♗c2 ♖d7 40 ♖a4 c6 41 ♗e4 c5 42 ♖a6+ ♔f7 43 ♖a5 ♖c7 44 ♔f2 ♔e7 45 ♔g3 g5 46 h4 gxh4+ 47 ♔xh4 ♘c4 48 ♖a6 ♘d6 49 ♗c2 c4 50 ♖a5 c3 51 g4 ♘c4! 52 ♖a1 ♔f8 53 ♔g3 ♘e3 54 ♗e4 c2 55 ♖c1 ♖d7 56 ♗xc2 ♖c7 57 ♖a1 ♘xc2 58 ♖a4 ♘e3 59 ♔f4 ♖c4+ 0-1

The 'Chess Holiday' Experience

One of the things that seemed to go down very well at this year's event was the tourist excursions I organised for families and players who wished to take up to three half-point byes. Two carloads of chess tourists enjoyed walking around the historic Durham Castle and Cathedral, the Vindolanda Roman Fort along Hadrian's Wall, and – my personal favourite – Bamburgh Castle in Northumberland. Against the backdrop of the Northumberland cliffs, after we toured the castle, we sat cross-legged on picnic blankets to watch as a richly-comic, open-air performance of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was performed by an all-female quartet of cycling actors, the aptly-named Handlebards.

I should, perhaps, offer a word to the wise for other would-be international tournament organisers in regional centres such as Liverpool, Leeds, Exeter and Norwich – It can be a huge undertaking, and one that requires quite some efforts from a team of dedicated volunteers to make it work. But the payoff is the huge amount of positive feedback we have received about the event from players and families who would like to return next year.

I am glad to say that preparations are already well underway for next year's Northumbria Masters, with the provisional dates of August 27-31, 2020. We are hoping to include more excursions for players and their families, to make it again an enjoyable chess holiday – at the same time as being a serious and prestigious international chess festival. These are likely to include a visit to Alnwick Castle, the famous location of the Harry Potter films...

For me, personally, the renaissance of the Northumbria Masters is about more than just retying the knot of history. It is hopefully a way in which chess at all levels can be revived in the various regions of the country – and serve as an example to other local organisers: If you build it, they will come.

Never Mind the Grandmasters...

Here come the amateurs - by Carl Portman (carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk)

Welcome to the second of my two-part report on my trip to France to meet and play chess legend Anatoly Karpov. Previously I told the story, but now I shall give you the game. I should say that it was only ever my intention to meet the man, never expecting to actually *play* him, so when I took my place amongst the other 14 people (VIPs no less), I was happy beyond words.

Let's dive straight into game mode. I had actually done a little preparation before the match (as much as one can 'prepare' against such a leading light), and hoped that I would feel more comfortable at the board if we managed to deliver any semblance of what had been on my own chess board at home.

I now present the game with my home annotations. Please forgive my excitement, but it is not every day that one gets to play their chess idol. It is a standard game in many ways in chess terms, but the title says Karpov-Portman, which for me is bigger than the game – no matter how it panned out.

A.Karpov-C.Portman
Chartres (simul) 2019
Queen's Gambit Declined.

This is it. Karpov-Portman. How good does that sound? I only hoped that I could live up to it and at least not be the first to lose or get crushed in some wretched miniature of under 20 moves.

1 c4

Of course, I had prepared something against 'Tolya', pretty much assuming that he would play 1 d4, which he does a lot these days. Therefore 1 c4 came as a mild disappointment to me, but I thought I might still reach the position I wanted by transposition.

1...e6

A very flexible move, waiting to see what White will play.

2 d4

Aha, now I have got what I wanted.

2...d5 3 ♘c3 a6!?

The Janowski variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined. This is what I had hoped for. White is certainly encouraged to take on d5 as Black is threatening to take on c4 and hold on to the pawn. Rather amusingly I had also managed to play ...a6 against the former world champion. This is something that GM Tony Miles did with greater success, but on the first move, back in 1980 in a very famous game. Karpov paused at my table after I played 3...a6 then made his move. I note also that the new Everyman Chess book by Damian Lemos on the Queen's Gambit only touches on this move fleetingly saying that "This is a fairly solid try for Black".

4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f4 c6 6 e3 ♗d6 7 ♗g3

Chess is a funny old game. In my preparation I knew that I wanted to play my knight to e7 here followed by ...♗f5, but there's something about the 'live' situation with Karpov arriving quickly at the board that makes you sometimes play a different move over the board.

7...♘f6?!

How very silly. Instead, 7...♘e7 8 ♗d3 ♗f5 9 ♘f3 0-0 10 0-0 leads to a steady game. 7...♗f5 is also possible, and if 8 ♕b3 b5 (showing how useful 3...a6 is) 9 a4 b4 10 ♘ce2 a5.

8 ♗d3

I was annoyed with myself. Now I cannot put my bishop on f5, but where should it go?

8...♗e6 9 ♘ge2!

Who am I to give Anatoly Karpov an exclamation mark, yet in the heat of that fabulous French evening and with another 14 boards playing against him, he instantly played this move, which is better than 9 ♘f3 because the knight is heading for f4. If I remove it then White will have the bishop-pair.

9...♗xg3

I wasn't sure at all about this, but again Karpov was at the board pretty quickly. With no passes allowed, one was compelled to move the instant he arrived. Had I had more time, I would not have exchanged.

10 hxg3

I had no intention of castling short now that he had the open h-file.

10...♘bd7 11 ♘f4

My spider sense was in overdrive here. I sensed tactics for White and that I could go down like the Titanic very suddenly if not careful.

11...♕e7 12 a3

Putting a stop to any incursion by the black queen on b4.

12...b5

I knew this was a bit dodgy and the c-file would be good for White, but I wanted to try to be active.

13 ♘a2

He played this quickly, and I did not expect it. Of course, it is perfectly logical. The steed wants to go to b4, hitting the c6-square. I was beginning to get that sinking feeling here, but I chivvied myself up and reminded myself that there were still plenty of pieces of the board. I was also hoping that the players on the other boards were giving him plenty to think about.

13...c5

Giving me an isolated d-pawn if he takes, but again I wanted to try to be as active as I could.

14 dxc5

The agenda for the middle and endgame is appearing before our eyes – and those of the many onlookers packed around me. Were they hoping to see me achieve a positive result or see Karpov sentence me to a sordid and very live execution?

14...♘xc5 15 ♘b4

Ganging up on the d-pawn of course. I could not select a move at this point, but Karpov was only a couple of boards away. What to play, what to play?

15...♘xd3+

I knew it wasn't best, but it was a move.

16 ♕xd3 ♕d7

Going to b7 was a bit better here, but there we are.

17 ♘h5!

Now I really was trying to think deeply, but again Karpov was on the way. He had demolished a few boards, so time was getting ever shorter.

17...♘xh5

There was basically no choice, as 17...0-0?? would be a terrible mistake in the heat of the moment. It's easy to panic after all. Here 18 ♘xf6+ gxf6 19 ♕xh7# is truly an 'oops' moment.

18 ♖xh5 g6?!

Not best and I knew it. Actually, even 18...f5 was possible, but the best move was probably 18...h6. I realised, of course, that my move opened up gaping holes on the dark squares on the kingside, but every move has a drawback after all.

19 ♘xd5

It had been coming, but I refused to panic.

19...♗xd5

Forced as there were just too many good squares for the knight.

20 ♖xd5 ♕e7 21 ♖d1 0-0 22 ♖d7 ♕f6 23 ♕d4

He was coming round very quickly now and there really was only a minute or two to think. In principle I did not want to exchange queens. I would just be a pawn down against one of the legends of chess in a rook endgame, and who wants that? It was too late, though, as the former world champion's frame appeared at my board in no time at all. Botheration, no time to think. I was going to put my queen on c6 aiming at g2, but played...

23...♕xd4

....which the engine thinks is probably best.

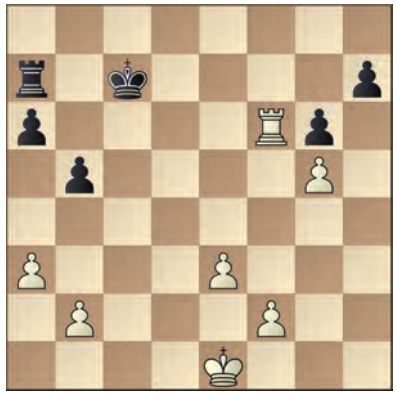
24 ♖1xd4

OK, I am lost, but I thought I would play a few more moves and see what happened. There were two boards remaining in play so it was a super quick turnaround now.

24...f5 25 g4 fxg4 26 ♖xg4 ♖f7 27 ♖gd4 ♖a7 28 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 29 ♖d6

An example of a superior rook, being very flexible and controlling more squares than its adversary. Should I resign in deference or play on a bit more? The bulldog spirit kicked in: still a bullet left in the chamber, so I cannot end my battle just yet.

29...♔f7 30 ♖b6 ♔e7 31 g4 ♔d7 32 g5 ♔c7 33 ♖f6



I knew, of course, that I had to keep rooks on, but by now I was the only board remaining (yes!), so it was one on one: Karpov versus Portman, and he was not hanging about. I now made another error and should have placed my king on d8.

33...♔c8??

After 33...♔d8 34 ♖f8+ ♔e7 35 ♖f6 b4! 36 axb4 ♖b7 37 ♖xa6 ♖xb4 38 ♖a7+ ♔e6 39 ♖xh7 White will win, but there are still a few moves in it.

34 ♖f8+ ♔b7 35 ♖f7+ ♔b6 36 ♖xa7 ♔xa7 37 ♔d2 ♔b6 38 ♔d3 ♔c5 39 b4+ ♔d5 40 f4 ♔e6 41 e4 ♔d6 42 ♔d4 1-0

Here I resigned. The crowd gave Anatoly a round of applause and a couple of onlookers even shook my own hand, presumably for fighting hard. Reflecting on the game, I do not think my opening choice was too bad at all for a simultaneous exhibition, but it is important to know the different lines really well. Karpov stopped and thought at my board on several occasions, so I knew I was posing him some questions at least. In any event my dream has been realised and I have now played such luminaries as Polugaevsky, Korchnoi, Taimanov and Karpov. That cannot be bad when all is said and done.

I am writing this column some weeks after the event and, of course, I am still bathing in the warm afterglow. However, a curious thought struck me. Dare I compare myself to the likes of Fischer and Kasparov? Well, I am going to! When Fischer won the title in 1972, he finally achieved his only goal. What was there to achieve after that? When Kasparov won the title in 1984, Petrosian's wife allegedly said she felt sorry for him, because the best day of his life had already happened.

For 43 years I have been chasing the Karpov rainbow. It has kept me going; kept the dream alive. Now that I have met him (found the pot of gold), I feel as if I have nowhere else to go. I feel as if 'that's it'. I have done what I set out to do at the age of 12 and the dream has terminated at the station.

Of course, my dreams happened off the board, unlike Bobby and Garry, but it was something I was utterly determined to do nonetheless. So, where do I go from here? Well, chess is like life in so many ways and I shall proceed as if playing a game and take it one move at a time, making a new plan. As long as I continue to play the game, I shall be happy.

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How Good is Your Chess?

by Grandmaster Daniel King

I have always enjoyed featuring the games of David Navara. He is by nature a calculator. That means he is prepared to explore obscure avenues of play if he feels there is a tactical shot that will turn the game in his favour. Remember this from the May 2015 *CHESS*?

D.Navara-M.Parligras
European Individual Championship, Jerusalem 2015

Here Navara has sacrificed a pawn and rammed the g-pawn up the board. If White's initiative disappears, he will be lost, but he had calculated that a big punch was on the way: 16 ♗xg6+!, which led to a spectacular victory after 16...hxg6 17 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 18 ♖xd5.

However, flouting positional conventions is risky: if the calculation is incorrect you can be left with a position that is rotten to the core.

D.Navara-D.Yuffa
FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019

Here is a very recent example of such a scenario. As I was writing this article, Navara was playing his first round in the World Cup knockout tournament against 22-year-old Daniel Yuffa from Russia. The first classical game was drawn, and then this. His opponent has played a solid Caro-Kann and been allowed to establish a strong bishop on e4. Navara must have been banking on his two bishops, but overlooked something in the fray. The game continued:

22 ♗b5 ♘f5!

Did that come as a surprise? If 23 ♗xe8 ♗xg2+ and if taken by the king, a knight fork follows on e3. So White has to retreat:

23 ♗c5 b6 24 ♗f2 ♖f8 25 a5

This compounds the error.

25...d4 26 ♗xd4 ♗xg2+ 27 ♔xg2 ♕d5+ 28 ♖f3 ♕xb5

Quite a transformation from the first position. The powerful knight on f5 combined with White's exposed king add up to a huge advantage for Black, and Yuffa went on to win convincingly.

That's the danger of Navara's approach; now let's see what happens when it works. This game was played in the Polish Team Championship and sees him dispatch a (relatively) weak player, but he does it with great aplomb. In this case he doesn't break too many rules, but there is certainly a great deal of calculation involved.

Begin after the first diagram. Whenever Black has moved, stop and try to guess White's reply which will be on the next line. Try to analyse as much as you would in a game – it could earn you bonus points. The article will test your standard of play or, if you prefer, just enjoy a fine game.

D.Navara-I.Janik
Polish Ekstraliga, Katowice 2019
Petroff Defence

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 5 d4 d5 6 ♗d3 ♘c6

This is just one of several plausible moves, including 6...♗e7 and 6...♗d6. Recently 6...♗f5 has been played in an attempt to neutralise White's dangerous bishop: 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 ♖e1 0-0 9 ♘c3 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♗xd3 11 ♕xd3, (Nepomniachtchi-Giri, Dortmund 2018).

7 ♘c3

This is slightly unusual. 7 0-0 is by far the most common move.

7...♘xc3

7...♗f5 is reasonable with similar lines to 6...♗f5.

8 bxc3 ♗g4

Instead, 8...♗e7 9 0-0 ♗g4 is another popular continuation: 10 ♖b1 ♖b8 11 h3 ♗h5 12 g4 ♗g6 13 ♗xg6 hxg6 14 ♔g2 ♕d7 15 ♕d3 0-0 16 c4 dxc4 17 ♕xc4 led to a fine endgame performance in Negi-Xu Xiangyu, Internet (rapid) 2019 (1-0, 51).

9 ♖b1 ♖b8

The test starts here.

10 h3

Four points. In this position with a near-symmetrical pawn structure it is going to take some skill to gain an advantage. This is a good start – we will see why in a moment.

The standard 10 0-0 (*two points*) 10...♗e7 11 ♖e1 is more pleasant for White, but it represents a missed opportunity.

10...♗h5

Instead, 10...♗xf3?! 11 ♕xf3 brings the queen to a powerful position. If Black continues 11...♗e7 then 12 ♖b5 wins a pawn. The lack of the light-squared bishop is evident.

11 ♗b5

Eight points. Congratulations if you found this bizarre move, although I'm concerned that you might have recently ingested some silicon. This was first played in the encounter Leko-Gelfand, 4th matchgame, Miskolc (rapid) 2010, and I have no doubt that it was prepared with machine guidance. To my eyes it looks so unnatural to move the bishop twice, particularly when it relinquishes its fine attacking post on d3. Naturally, it is all about tactics, and the tactics click for White.

Once again, while reasonable, 11 0-0 ♗e7 misses the boat (*two points* as a consolation).

11...♗d6

There are three previous games with this variation, including the game cited above, and at this point they took different directions.

Two games continued 11...♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 ♗e7 13 ♗a4 0-0 14 ♗b3 and the d-pawn drops, Ganguly-Shivananda, Kolkata 2012.

Perhaps you'd like to work out what happened in the original game Leko-Gelfand, after 11...♗e7? Answer on the next line.

12 g4 ♗g6 13 ♘e5. *Two points* if you got this far. This is the whole point of setting up the pin and also why White flicked in 10 h3. Black has to give up material: 13...0-0 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♘xc6 (15 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 16 ♘d7 wins an exchange, although Black has some compensation after 16...♕b1) 15...♖xb1 16 ♘xd8 ♗a3 17 ♗xa3 ♖xd1+ 18 ♔xd1 ♖xd8 19 ♔d2 ♖b8 20 ♖e1 with a clear advantage, as it is difficult to prevent the rook appearing on e7. Leko won after a long struggle, but it is one of those positions where, as the current expression goes, 'only two results are possible' – and this is no fun to defend for Black.

12 ♕e2+

Four points. This causes some disruption in Black's camp.

In this case 12 g4 ♗g6 13 ♘e5 0-0! gives White precisely nothing, as 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 loses a piece and 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 leaves him struggling to equalise.

12...♔f8

A necessary concession. Instead, 12...♗e7 makes no sense at all (13 g4 and 14 ♘e5 as above would be fatal); 12...♔d7 13 ♘e5+ ♗xe5 14 ♕xh5 is horrible; and 12...♕e7 13 ♗xc6+ wins a piece. After the game continuation Black can no longer castle, but there is one benefit at least: the pin on the knight on c6 is broken.

David Navara warmed up for the World Cup in the Polish Extraliga, but was eliminated in the first round in Khanty-Mansiysk by Daniil Yuffa who would then knock out Luke McShane.

13 0-0

Three points. For the moment, White has achieved all he can with his active forces and it is time to bring up the reserves.

In this case, 13 g4 would not be appropriate: 13...♗g6 and a follow-up isn't obvious. Black can soon play ...h5 to bring the king's rook into play.

13...♘e7

A craven retreat. Black is in a difficult situation, but this exacerbates the problems. Instead, 13...♘a5 aims at the c4-square and provides a little more stability.

14 ♗d3

Three points. The bishop has done its job on b5 and returns to its best square, pointing at the kingside.

With Black's king stuck in the middle, my first instinct would be to open the position with 14 c4 (*one point*), but the slightly awkward position of the bishop on b5 gives rise to a tactical problem. Black might consider two possible defences:

a) 14...c6 15 c5 ♗c7 16 ♗d3 ♗g6. White still has the advantage, but the position on the queenside has, to some extent, closed and it isn't entirely clear what White has achieved.

b) 14...a6 15 c5 axb5 16 cxd6 ♕xd6 17 ♖xb5 ♘c6 and the exchanges relieve some of the pressure on Black's position.

However, 14 ♖e1 (*three points*) is a good alternative to the game.

14 g4 (*two points*) is not too bad in this case, although White has to follow up vigorously: 14...♗g6 15 ♘e5 c6 16 ♗d3 ♗xd3 17 cxd3 f6 18 f4 and the initiative continues.

14...f6

This makes room for the king to step up the board (potentially), and controls the e5-square, but it is not a beautiful move. 14...♗g6 would have been more prudent, ready to exchange off that dangerous bishop.

15 c4

Three points. Immediately highlighting the drawbacks of ...f6: the king will never feel secure once the a2-g8 diagonal opens.

15 ♖e1 (*two points*) is also sensible, though it doesn't have the force of the pawn push.

15...dxc4

Instead, 15...c6 would be more solid.

16 ♗xc4

One point. How do you think Black's king is feeling with that bishop slicing across its face?

16...♕d7

17 ♖e1

Three points. Very prudent and practical – and restrained!

David has a knack for deep calculation, and I suspect that he spent some time looking at a wild alternative here: 17 ♘e5. First off, 17...♗xe2 18 ♘xd7+ ♔e8 19 ♘xf6+ gxf6 20 ♗e2 wins a pawn for nothing. As 17...♕f5 18 g4 is strong, Black has to resort to the fantastical 17...♕xh3, then 18 ♕e4 ♕c8 19 ♕h4 ♗g6 20 ♘xg6+ ♘xg6 21 ♕h5 gives White excellent compensation for the pawn (I don't see how the king will ever escape). But perhaps he wasn't sure about 18...♕f5 19 ♕xf5 ♘xf5 20 ♘d7+ ♔e7 21 ♘xb8 ♖xb8. Black has at least managed to free his pieces and has a knight and a pawn for the exchange, but White still has decent winning chances.

There is a huge amount to calculate – not that Navara would find that off-putting, but for once he probably decided to make a practical decision: there simply isn't a need to invest a chunk of time in checking these variations when 17 ♖e1 is simple and strong. Nevertheless, *three points* for 17 ♘e5.

17 ♗e6 (*two points*) is also worth a look. The only drawback is 17...♗xf3, which forces 18 gxf3. Does that matter? Not at the moment. Nevertheless, Navara might have been concerned that after 18...♕e8, and the queen bouncing out to g6 or h5, Black has a sniff of counterplay.

17...♘c6

18 ♗e6

Two points. That is a great square to occupy. Told you 14...f6 wasn't too clever.

White could protect the d-pawn with 18 c3 or 18 ♗e3, but they lack vigour. 18 ♕d3 (*one point*) is better as it pre-empts ...♖e8.

18...♕e8

19 ♗b2

Two points. It is a pity to block the rook on b1, but as well as protecting the d-pawn, the bishop is pointing in the right direction.

I am amazed at how responsibly Navara is playing. Some of us would have hit the gas with 19 g4 ♗f7 20 d5 (*two points*). White has a powerful initiative – but the pawn advance in front of the king always raises the stakes.

19...♘d8

20 d5

One point. No surprises there. Retreating the bishop and heading into the endgame would represent salvation for Black.

20...♘xe6

21 dxe6

One point.

21...♕a4

22 ♕e3

Six points. While the board is beginning to burn, Navara still retains his cool. This simple nudge is very crafty: the queen covers squares over the whole board, down to a7 and also h6 (watch out for ♗xf6 and ♕h6+), and frees the knight for action.

How many of us would bluster forward with 22 e7+ (*one point*) 22...♔g8 23 g4 ♗f7...and then what? Don't get me wrong, this is still extremely dangerous for Black, but there is counterplay. For example, 24 g5 ♖e8 25 gxf6 h5 – and the rook crawls out via h6 to attack the king. This variation only scratches the surface of the possibilities here, but it shows that after the pawn advances to e7 it is potentially vulnerable; and the g-pawn's advance is also chancy.

22...♗xf3

23 e7+

One point. The *same score* for 23 ♕xf3. White dominates in both cases.

23...♔e8

Black had to try 23...♔f7 with the 'threat' of bringing the rook to e8. It's not pretty, but White would have had to find some decent moves to prosecute the advantage.

24 ♕xf3

One point.

Subtract two points for 24 gxf3. Black can exchange queens with 24...♕f4 and then round up the e-pawn.

24...h5

Preventing the check on h5 and, who knows, on a good day the rook may creep out via h6. Dream on...

25 ♗xf6

Five points. Yes, there are alternatives – I'll give *a consolation point* for either 25 ♖bd1 or 25 ♕f5 – but the bishop sacrifice breaks through to the king and is absolutely decisive.

25...gxf6

26 ♕xf6

One point.

26...♖g8

27 ♕e6

Five points. A delicate and deadly step in the right direction.

27...♖g7

28 ♖xb7

Three points. If ever there was a moment to say 'Boom!', it is now. That is why the queen stepped to e6: 28...♖xb7 29 ♕c8+. By the way, this could have been played on the previous turn (27 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 28 ♕e6), so *balance your score* if you did just that.

28...♖a8

29 ♖eb1 1-0

Three points. With the decisive threat of 30 ♖b8+ which can only be parried by nonsensical moves, so Black resigned.

Now add up your points:

0-15	Unlucky
16-31	Average Club Player
32-40	Strong Club Player
41-45	FIDE Master
46-53	International Master
54-62	Grandmaster

Ed. – If you have any questions regarding this article, please contact Daniel directly through his website www.danielking.biz.

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My '59 Memorable Wins

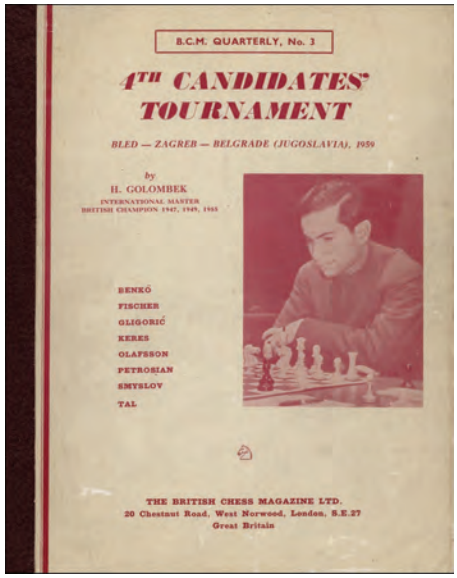
John Henderson returns to 1959 and the Candidates where Tal beat Fischer 4-0

As 2019 draws ever closer to its end, this past year we've celebrated many milestone anniversaries. It's 50 years since the moon landings, 80 years since the start of World War II, and 200 years since the Peterloo Massacre. In pop culture, 50 years ago the movies *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Easy Rider* and *Midnight Cowboy* were released; the anarchic antics of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* was launched on the BBC; and *Abbey Road*, with the iconic zebra crossing album shot of The Beatles, was the last thing the Fab Four ever recorded.

So you can be forgiven for tuning into the radio, switching on the TV or picking up a newspaper over the this past year and to have taken a sentimental trip down memory lane with all those landmark anniversaries. Chess is no different: we deal everyday with a game that's rich in heritage, and there are many anniversaries that deserve to be remembered and written about. And recently, I allowed myself to wallow in nostalgia as I delved into the 60th anniversary of the fourth Candidates' Tournament that ran in Yugoslavia from September 7th to October 31th 1959, and split between the three cities of Bled, Zagreb and Belgrade.

Eight of the world's strongest players fought out this epic gladiatorial contest of 28 rounds(!), with the competitors facing each other four times over two months for the right to challenge Mikhail Botvinnik for the title of world chess champion. This was the tournament that launched Mikhail Tal on his meteoric rise to become the youngest-ever world champion. It was also a tournament that shot American prodigy Bobby Fischer into the annals as another rising star, because in qualifying for it as a 15-year-old from the Portoroz Interzonal of the previous year, he became the world's youngest grandmaster. And the intriguing battle and budding bromance between the two ultimately proved to be the deciding factor on just who would go on to challenge Bovinnik.

Playing a swashbuckling brand of chess that instantly made him a big fan-favourite, Tal won the event with great élan, winning 16(!) games – many of them in dazzling style – to finish one and a half points clear of front-runner Paul Keres. And the result is all the more remarkable because Tal got off to a very slow start, handicapped by the fact that just a week before the start of the tournament, he was rushed to hospital and had his appendix removed – and this goes a long way to explain his early round losses in Bled to ex-world champion Vasily Smyslov and Keres.



The English language tournament book of the 1959 Candidates included all the games.

Fischer, who had dropped out of Erasmus Hall High School and turned 'pro' to play in the tournament, had a true baptism of fire for his first tilt at a world championship qualifier, as he was roundly routed by Tal – but the teenager had his 'moments' in those games, and the final score could well have been a lot closer than what it turned out to be. Some with a ringside seat even seemed to think that Fischer only gained more confidence and self-belief in his abilities the longer the tournament went on, where with each round he was maturing as a player, making his metamorphosis-like transition into an elite-level GM; possibly even a future world champion in the making.

That was certainly the view taken by chief arbiter Harry Golombek. Writing in the *B.C.M. Quarterly, No. 3* (the only English-language book that covered the 1959 Candidates, with each of the 28 rounds reviewed and all 112 games annotated in some detail), Golombek noted: "The U.S.A. champion, Bobby Fischer, was improving all the time the tournament was played. It was in fact said of him that given fifty-six rounds instead of the mere twenty-eight and he would have come first. Anyway, for a sixteen-year-old he did not do so bad if I may be allowed to fall into his own transatlantic idiom. He is at the moment no match for Tal but his two victories over Keres and his equal score with Smyslov are sufficient in themselves to prove his real grandmaster class."

M.Tal-R.Fischer
Bled Candidates
(round 6)
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 d5

It was during this period that Tal turned Petrosian's strategic system into a killer line.

7...♘bd7

A standard KID move, but we'd have to wait until the mid-sixties for the most testing way to counter the Petrosian System – developed and championed by Ukrainians Leonid Stein and Efim Geller – with an effective queenside development strategy based around 7...a5! 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 ♘a6 10 ♘d2 ♗d7 11 0-0 ♕e8, etc.

8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 a6

Although playable, this system was all but discarded after the 1959 Candidates, and the better alternative of 9...g5 was adopted for a while, until the aforementioned Ukrainian set-up became almost de rigueur for Black. The main idea behind this slow set-up is that Black wants to play ...♕e8 without having to worry about a possible ♘b5.

10 ♘d2 ♕e8 11 0-0 ♘h7 12 b4 ♘g5 13 f3 f5

Better than 13...♕e7 14 ♔h1 f5 15 ♖c1 ♘f6 16 c5 ♘h5 17 c6! b6 18 exf5 gxf5 19 g3, as was seen in Petrosian-Gligoric from the same event.

14 ♗f2

We basically have a standard KID set-up

Tal began slowly in the 1959 Candidates, but boy did he do well against the teenage Fischer.

with attacks on both wings, but with White's bishop on f2 and Black's knights a little awkwardly placed than normal – but Fischer soon brings them into the game for what turns out to be a dynamic contest.

14...♕e7 15 ♖c1 ♘f6 16 c5 ♗d7

Preventing c5-c6.

17 ♕c2 ♘h5 18 b5 fxe4 19 ♘dxe4 ♘xe4 20 fxe4 ♘f4

With the knight finding a good outpost, and soon to combine with the queen, both sides here have chances – but while Fischer squanders his chances, Tal capitalises on his.

21 c6 ♕g5!

Attack is always the best form of defence!

22 ♗f3 bxc6 23 dxc6 ♗g4 24 ♗xg4 ♕xg4 25 ♗e3 axb5 26 ♗xf4 exf4 27 ♘xb5 ♖f7

It's around here that Fischer begins to lose the thread of the game. Better was 27...f3!? 28 ♘xc7 ♖a5 29 h3 ♕g3 30 ♕b3+ d5 31 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 32 ♕xf3 ♕xc7 33 exd5 ♗e5 34 ♕e4. It is difficult for Black to win this position with the passed pawns and his weak king, but equally it is also difficult for White to think he is winning, being minus a piece and with his own king vulnerable. Indeed, here a draw would be an honourable result for these two fighters.

28 ♕c4 ♖c8 29 ♖f3!

Stopping the ...f3 push and threatening to double rooks on the f-file.

29...♗e5 30 ♖cf1 ♔g7 31 a4

Better than the alternative of 31 ♘d4 ♗xd4+ (Black has to stop the knight getting into e6, as after 31...♖e8 32 a4 there's no counterplay to stop the pawn running far up the board) 32 ♕xd4+ ♔g8 33 ♕c4 ♔g7 34 g3 ♖cf8 35 a4 ♕h5 36 ♕d5 g5 and you get the feeling that all three results are a distinct possibility.

31...♖a8 32 ♔h1 ♕g5?

A pity, as 32...g5 would have kept the game nicely balanced.

33 g3! ♖af8 34 gxf4 ♗xf4 35 ♘d4!

Now the knight invasion into e6 is winning.

35...♕h4 36 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 37 ♘e6+ ♔h8 38 ♕d4+!

Ouch. The (full) point of Tal's combination is 38...♖4f6 39 ♘xf8! when Black suffers a heavy loss of material.

38...♖8f6 39 ♘xf4 ♔h7 40 e5! dxe5 41 ♕d7+ 1-0

Fischer resigns, as 41...♔g8 42 ♕c8+ ♖f8 43 ♕xf8+!! ♔xf8 44 ♘xg6+ is a crushing blow.

An amusing aside to the second encounter between the two now comes to life for us by way of some scarce footage of the 1959 Candidates that was uploaded to YouTube in 2016. The background to the short video (which can easily be found on the ubiquitous video site with a simple 'Fischer-Tal 1959' search) is that, in his early days, Fischer doggedly played the Two Knights Variation against the Caro-Kann – and the Soviets had singled this out to be a big weakness, all but instructing their players to play the Caro against the dangerous young American.

Fischer lost with it against Tigran Petrosian in round 2, drew with Smyslov in round 7 and then lost to Keres – certainly no Caro-Kann practitioner – in round 8 (and then again in round 22). So by round 13, when Fischer faced Tal with white for the first time, after his "best by test" 1 e4, Tal jokingly half fakes 1...c6 then, with a devilish smile on his face, quickly pushes his pawn on to c5 against his poker-faced young American opponent.

But was it a joke at all? As noted above, the Soviets all but issued a three-line whip for the Caro to be played against Fischer – and according to Tibor Karolyi, in his excellent *Mikhail Tal's Best Games 1: The Magic of Youth*, Tal did indeed seriously consider playing the Caro. But fortunately for us, though unfortunately for Fischer, he didn't, and so we got in on the joke by seeing into the mischievous side to Tal, not to mention a very nice game.

R.Fischer-M.Tal
Bled Candidates
(round 13)
Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♗b3 ♗e7

In the 27th round, as we'll see below, Tal tried the wilder 7...b5 and soon got into difficulties.

8 f4 0-0 9 ♕f3 ♕c7 10 0-0

After the game Fischer thought that this wasn't aggressive enough and Petrosian even advocated 10 g4 as the strongest option.

10...b5! 11 f5?

A strategic blunder from Fischer. Better was 11 a3, preventing Black's next move. However, 11 f5 was the sort of aggressive advance in the Sozin that had served the young American well in the past. Unfortunately for him, Tal was more than ready for it.

11...b4 12 ♘a4

Forced, of course, as 12 ♘ce2 e5 somewhat embarrasses the other knight.

12...e5 13 ♘e2 ♗b7 14 ♘g3 ♘bd7 15 ♗e3 ♗c6 16 ♗f2 ♕b7

The tempting 16...♕a5 backfires after 17 a3!, but with the text, with little or no

effort, Tal has obtained an ideal Sicilian set-up with mounting pressure on e4.

17 ♖fe1 d5!

Whenever Black gets this central thrust in, invariably it is always a strategically telling sign that he is doing well in the Sicilian.

18 exd5 ♘xd5 19 ♘e4 ♘f4 20 c4?!

Not the best of moves from Fischer, who looks to support e4 with a bishop on c2. More logical would have been 20 c3!?, stopping Tal's big idea in the game of ...g6 and ...f5, where now 20...♘f6 21 ♗c2 bxc3 22 ♘axc3 ♕xb2 23 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 24 ♗e4 ♗xe4 25 ♘xe4 ♗e7 26 f6! gxf6 27 ♗e3 gives White chances of saving the game.

20...g6!

A brilliant dynamic idea, typical of Tal's creative genius as more lines are opened for the black kingside attack.

21 fxg6

You really know the position is bad when the engine here suggests that the best try is 21 f6 ♘xf6 22 ♘ac5 ♕c7 23 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 24 ♘e4 ♗e7 25 c5 ♔g7! and White is in deep trouble.

21...f5

Tal cuts straight to the chase.

22 g7

No better was 22 gxh7+ ♔xh7 23 ♗c2 ♔h8! and White is set for a heavy loss of material with the pin on the knight on e4.

22...♔xg7 23 ♕g3+ ♔h8 24 ♘ec5 ♘xc5 25 ♗xc5 ♗xc5+ 26 ♘xc5 ♕c7 27 ♕e3 ♖ae8

Not only defending e5, but also bringing his final piece into the fray.

28 ♖e2

Pure desperation from Fischer, but his position is bust anyway, as snatching the a-pawn with 28 ♘xa6 will lose quickly to 28...♕g7 29 ♕g3 ♕a7+, picking off the errant knight.

28...♘xe2+ 29 ♕xe2

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29...♗xg2!

Tal is completely winning, but he doesn't hold back by finding the most powerful, forcing path to victory.

30 ♘xa6 ♕a7+ 31 ♔xg2 ♖g8+ 32 ♔h3 ♕g7 33 ♗d1 ♖e6 0-1

Fischer resigns with many forced mates now looming large.

M.Tal-R.Fischer
Zagreb Candidates
(round 20)
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 d5 ♘bd7 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 a6

Fischer played 9..a6 in both his games with Black against Tal. Indeed, as explained in their first game, the Petrosian System was relatively new to theory at this time, and it would be over a decade before the Ukrainian treatment showed the best way to play against it. However, at the time, 9...a6 was mildly popular during the 1959 Candidates Tournament, though its bad results – played four, lost four – more or less consigned it to obscurity.

10 0-0 ♕e8 11 ♘d2 ♘h7 12 b4 ♗f6

In their earlier game, Fischer played 12...♘g5 and he did seem to generate genuine activity. But perhaps fearing the Soviets would have found something better for Tal, he tries another idea that is just far too slow and was never repeated.

13 ♗xf6 ♘hxf6 14 ♘b3 ♕e7 15 ♕d2 ♔h7 16 ♕e3 ♘g8 17 c5 f5 18 exf5 gxf5 19 f4 exf4 20 ♕xf4

Stronger was 20 ♕xe7+! ♘xe7 21 ♖xf4 ♘e5 22 ♖e1 when White does have a serious initiative with the big space advantage added to the long-term vulnerability of the f5-pawn.

20...dxc5!

This came as quite a surprise to Tal, who had originally thought the text to be positionally unplayable, expecting Fischer to play 20...♘e5, and now had to reevaluate the position.

21 ♗d3!

The only move that makes sense, in what's fast becoming an ever-critical position.

21...cxb4 22 ♖ae1 ♕f6?

One slip against Tal in a double-edged position, and Fischer is toast. The position does look dangerous with all of Tal's pieces set to strike, but had Fischer found the correct continuation of 22...♕d6! 23 ♗xf5+ ♔h8 24 ♕d4+ (even the stronger engine suggestion of 24 ♕xd6 cxd6 25 ♘e4 ♘b6 looks as if we are heading for a scenario of a mass exchange of pieces and a likely draw) 24...♘df6! (in his analysis to this game in the equally wonderful *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal*, the maestro only showed 24...♕f6 25 ♕xb4 ♕b6+ 26 ♕d4+! where White is superior – but even years before the advent of engines, it was known that 24...♘df6 was much better) 25 ♗xc8 ♖axc8 26 ♘e4 (the tempting 26 ♖e6 looks good, but unfortunately for White there is 26...c5! 27 ♕h4 ♕d7 28 ♘e4 ♘xe4 29 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 30 ♕xe4 ♕g7 when Black looks to have no worries) 26...♕xd5 27 ♕b2 Black looks to be over the worst of it, and only has to be mindful of the pin down the long diagonal.

23 ♖e6!

Tal at his sublime best, with a nice piece sacrifice that deflects Black's queen from defending his vulnerable king.

23...♕xc3 24 ♗xf5+ ♖xf5 25 ♕xf5+

♔h8 26 ♖f3

Fortunately for Tal, and conversely, unfortunately for Fischer, the queen cuts a forlorn figure with all the checking squares covered.

26...♕b2 27 ♖e8 ♘df6 28 ♕xf6+ ♕xf6 29 ♖xf6 ♔g7 30 ♖ff8

Tal's doubled rooks on the eighth rank totally dominate Fischer's position.

30...♘e7 31 ♘a5 h5

Lesser mortals may well have resigned by now, but I suppose there's that psychological barrier of not wanting to be seen resigning early doors, so Fischer drags the game out a few more moves.

32 h4

Zugzwang is almost complete now.

32...♖b8 33 ♘c4 b5 34 ♘e5 1-0

Totally paralysed, Fischer now resigns in the face of either a further loss of material or being mated by ♖f7+ and ♖h8.

The fourth and final showdown between Tal and Fischer proved to be the marquee game the pair played in the Candidates – and an important game in many respects for both players. For Fischer, the new kid on the block looking to make his name on the world stage, it was almost the biggest win of his life – and it had to have made a big impact on the young American at the time, because it was titled 'A very near miss' and one of only three losses (the other two being against Boris Spassky, Mar del Plata 1960, and Efim Geller, Skopje 1967) that he included in his timeless tome, *My 60 Memorable Games*.

For Tal, the 4-0 whitewashing of Fischer, especially with the fourth win coming in the penultimate 27th round, ultimately proved to be the crucial difference between Tal and Keres taking first place...and those wins also come with one further moment of mirth at the expense of Fischer from Tal at the end of the tournament.

The Yugoslavians were notoriously chess crazy, and crowds would descend on a tournament like they were turning out for a big football match. All three venues had seen packed houses throughout, and the loyalty of the fans was genuinely split between Tal and Fischer. And after the final round at the Belgrade Trade Union House, a large swell of autograph-seeking fans gathered around Tal for the newly-anointed title-challenger to sign official bulletins, commemorative programs and chess memorabilia. But Tal being

Under the gaze of Pal Benko, the teenage Bobby takes on the legendary Estonian Paul Keres.

Tal, he began signing Fischer's name in jest that left them all puzzled. "Why not?" explained Tal to the fans. "I've beaten Bobby so often – that gives me the right to sign for him!"

R.Fischer-M.Tal
Belgrade Candidates
(round 27)
Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗c4

The Fischer favourite of the Sozin variation.

6...e6 7 ♗b3 b5 8 f4 b4

The ambitious option here, but ultimately also the most risky line for Black.

9 ♘a4 ♘xe4?!

Safer is 9...♗b7, but apparently the story goes that Tal was looking at this line in preparing for Fischer with Tigran Petrosian, and he immediately wanted to take the pawn. Tal wasn't completely sure, but he finally made up his mind to press the gamble button only when sitting across the board from the young American prodigy.

10 0-0 g6 11 f5

This position is a red rag to a bull, and Fischer needs no encouragement to push on.

11...gxf5 12 ♘xf5!

The most logical continuation, as the young Fischer plays very much in the style of Tal himself.

12...♖g8

Black can't recapture on f5, as 12...exf5 13 ♕d5! ♖a7 14 ♕d4! will pick-off one of the rooks.

13 ♗d5!

This powerful move swings the game in Fischer's favour.

13...♖a7

The bishop is taboo in view of 13...exd5 14 ♕xd5 ♗xf5 15 ♖xf5 ♖a7 16 ♕xe4+ ♖e7 17 ♕xb4 and Black's defences are in a mess. Now, though, we get to see the spectacular sight of Tal having to defend with great care, facing a dangerous young opponent who only wants to inflict on him a Tal-like sacrificial kill.

14 ♗xe4

The engines believe this move to be best, but Fischer went as far as giving it a question mark in *My 60 Memorable Games*. Instead, he felt that he should have gone for 14 ♗e3! ♘c5 15 ♕h5! ♖g6 16 ♖ae1 with all his pieces bearing down on Tal's king.

This certainly looks impressive to see it on the board, but the cold, unbeating heart of the engine knows no nerves, and finds hidden resources for Black with 16...♖c7 17 ♘xc5 (better than 17 ♗xc5 dxc5 18 ♘b6 c4 19 ♘xc8 ♗c5+ 20 ♔h1 ♕xd5 21 ♘g7+ ♔d8 22 ♖d1 ♗d4! 23 ♕xd5+ exd5 24 ♖xd4 ♔xc8 25 ♘f5 ♖e6! and Black has equalized) 17...dxc5 18 ♘h4 ♕xd5 19 ♕xd5 exd5 20 ♗f4+ ♖e7 21 ♘xg6 hxg6 22 ♗xb8 ♖xe1 23 ♖xe1+ ♗e6. Yes, White has a material advantage, but there's a lot of work still to do to convert this for a win, as it is going to be difficult trying to break down the queenside pawns and the anchor supplied by the bishop on e6.

14...exf5 15 ♗xf5

The engine at least agrees with Fischer here, that it is probably better to avoid exchanges and play 15 ♗d5!.

15...♖e7

Tal has to find a protective shield for his king now stuck in the middle of the board.

16 ♗xc8 ♕xc8

17 ♗f4?

Fischer and the engine concur here again that White should have played the prophylactic 17 ♖f2 (or even Fischer's method with 17 c3 first) 17...♕c6 18 c3!, protecting the knight on a4 and looking to open the c-file.

17...♕c6 18 ♕f3 ♕xa4!

This came as a big surprise to Fischer, who only expected 18...♕xf3 19 ♖xf3 ♖e2 20 ♖f2 ♖xf2 21 ♔xf2 where he thought he had a slight edge due to Black's disconnected pawns.

19 ♗xd6 ♕c6! 20 ♗xb8

Also a possibility was 20 ♗xe7 ♕xf3 21 ♖xf3 ♗xe7 22 ♖e1 ♘c6 23 c3, leading to a roughly level position.

20...♕b6+ 21 ♔h1 ♕xb8

22 ♕c6+?!

Fischer gets "seduced" by the check and, from here, the game only gets more and more difficult for the young American grandmaster. But that's only half the story: he originally intended to play the much better 22 ♖ae1!, even going as far as writing the move on his scoresheet – and after the game, Tal asked Fischer why he changed his mind and the American replied, "Well, you laughed when I wrote it down!"

Most players and commentators did, indeed, think that Fischer had missed a win here with 22 ♖ae1!, as it is not easy to meet the dual threats of 23 ♕c6+ and, more menacingly, 23 ♕xf7+. And even Tal thought he was dead here, but he'd missed the resource 22...♔d8! that holds everything together. Fischer explained in *My 60 Memorable Games* that, after studying the position for ages, he could only find a draw – and the engine also agrees with Fischer, showing 23 ♕d3+! ♔c8 24 ♕f5+ ♔d8 (it's too dangerous to try running with the king: 24...♔b7? 25 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 26 ♕e4+ wins back the piece with a won game) 25 ♕xh7 ♖xe1 26 ♖xe1 and Black has to tread carefully now, with 26...♖g7 27 ♕h4+ ♔c7 28 ♕c4+ ♔d7 29 ♕d4+ ♕d6 30 ♕a7+ and the king can't escape from the perpetual check.

22...♖d7

The main difference now is that Tal can set up a little protective box for his king with his pieces – something that wasn't available after 22 ♖ae1!. You live and learn. Well, you live anyway!

23 ♖ae1+ ♗e7 24 ♖xf7?

The speculative bolt out of the blue always looks good on the board, and it probably feels good when you play it – but this sacrifice just backfires with correct play. Fischer's only hope was to try 24 ♕f6!? ♖f8 25 ♕xa6 f5! with better chances of being able to hold the game.

24...♔xf7 25 ♕e6+

25...♔f8!

Fischer had overlooked this possibility. He thought Tal had to play 25...♔g7? and after 26 ♕xd7 believed he was winning – but it turns out to be Tal who is the one clearly winning.

26 ♕xd7

It looks like there should be a mate, but there isn't. After 26 ♖f1+ ♔g7 the king finds a safe haven on h8.

26...♕d6 27 ♕b7 ♖g6

And with a couple of very accurate moves from Tal, Fischer is in dire straits as the soon-to-be world champion has provided an effective shield for his king from the checks.

28 c3!

The exclam is for effort rather than a good move, as Fischer adopts a good rule of thumb in such positions, as he simply explains in *My 60 Memorable Games*: "Black's extra piece means less with each Pawn that's exchanged."

28...a5 29 ♕c8+ ♔g7 30 ♕c4 ♗d8

Tal is looking for ...♗c7 forcing g2-g3 and then ...♕c6+ trading queens, but quicker would have been 30...♕c5! 31 ♕e4 bxc3! 32 bxc3 ♗d6 with ...♖f6 and ...♕h5 to come.

31 cxb4 axb4 32 g3 ♕c6+ 33 ♖e4 ♕xc4 34 ♖xc4 ♖b6 35 ♔g2 ♔f6 36 ♔f3 ♔e5

He might have struggled against the Caro-Kann and Tal, but Bobby Fischer left the 1959 Candidates a visably stronger player.

37 ♔e3 ♗g5+ 38 ♔e2 ♔d5 39 ♔d3 ♗f6 40 ♖c2

It was somewhat slim, but the best hope to preserve drawing chances was with 40 b3.

40...♗e5 41 ♖e2 ♖f6

It's just a matter of time now, as Tal places his pieces on their optimum squares to push Fischer into even more passivity.

42 ♖c2 ♖f3+ 43 ♔e2 ♖f7 44 ♔d3 ♗d4

Tal "inches his way in" according to Fischer.

45 a3 b3! 46 ♖c8 ♗xb2 47 ♖d8+ ♔c6 48 ♖b8 ♖f3+ 49 ♔c4 ♖c3+! 50 ♔b4 ♔c7 51 ♖b5 ♗a1!

The b-pawn is a winner.

52 a4 b2 0-1

The rest is history, as they say. With that penultimate round win over Fischer, Tal all but secured victory at the 1959 Candidates, and would then go on the following year for a more famous victory as he beat Botvinnik to be crowned world champion – and no doubt we'll return to this encounter also in 2020, especially as that, too, is about to reach its 60th anniversary.

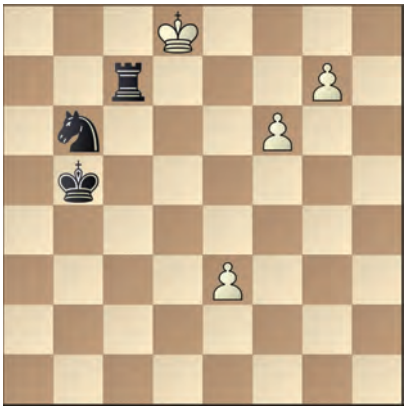
Studies
with Stephenson

We all know how important it is that youngsters are encouraged to play at all levels. It is important for chess players, but it is absolutely vital for chess composition (both composing and solving), which has much smaller numbers of active participants. The paradox is that there are probably fewer people composing or solving regularly than in the last one hundred years while at the same time the number of problems and studies composed is higher than ever.

There have been recent successes on the solving side. Witness the several successful juniors competing in international solving competitions in recent years. This is thanks to efforts in several countries to interest juniors in solving. In this country, thanks to Phill Beckett of the ECF, there are now regular solving competitions for juniors organised by the ECF. It is good to see the former BCF taking an active interest in chess composition for the first time since the late 1970s.

But what of composing? The news there is encouraging. Thanks mainly to the efforts of Marjan **Kovačević**, a Serbian Grandmaster of Composing and Solving, and a small group working under the auspices of the World Federation for Chess Composition, the fourth Youth Chess Composing Challenge was recently organised. This contained sections for 'mates in 2', 'helpmates' and endgame studies. The task required in the latter section was that a piece moves in front of a white passed pawn. The results were published during the recent WFCC meeting in Vilnius and I am delighted to present two of the award-winners here.

Andrij Sergiienko
2nd Place, YCCC, 2019



White to play and win

White's three passed pawns battle against rook and knight.

1 e4!

Guarding d5, which is vital for the subsequent play. If White omits this and tries to hurry things, Black can draw after 1 f7? ♖xf7 2 g8♕ ♖d7+ 3 ♔e8 ♘d5 4 ♕g5 ♖e7+ 5 ♔f8 ♔c5 or 1 ♔xc7? ♘d5+ 2 ♔d6 ♘xf6 3 ♔e6 ♘g8 4 ♔f7 ♘h6+.

1...♔c6

If 1...♖c8+ White promotes and wins: 2 ♔e7 ♖g8 3 e5 ♔c6 4 ♔f7 ♖a8 5 ♔e6 ♖e8+ (or 5...♖g8 6 f7 ♖xg7 7 f8♕) 6 ♔f5 ♖g8 7 f7 ♖xg7 8 f8♕.

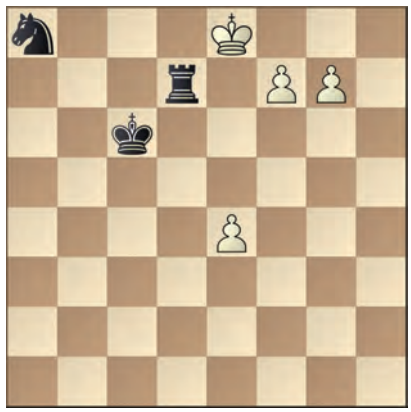
2 f7 ♘a8!

Planning a future move to c7. Instead, 2...♖d7+ 3 ♔e8 ♘a8 4 ♔f8 transposes to the main line.

3 ♔e8

And not 3 f8♕? ♖d7+ 4 ♔c8 (4 ♔e8 ♘c7#) 4...♘b6+ 5 ♔b8 ♖b7#.

3...♖d7



4 ♔f8!

White moves in front of one of his passed pawns. 4 g8♕? leads to 4...♘c7+ 5 ♔f8 ♘e6+ 6 ♔e8 ♘c7+ and a draw by repetition.

4...♘c7

4...♖d8+ 5 ♔e7 ♖d4 6 f8♕ ♖xe4+ 7 ♔f7 ♘c7 8 g8♕ ♖f4+ 9 ♔g6 ♖xf8 10 ♕xf8 also wins.

5 ♔g8

White moves in front of his other passed pawn, avoiding this further draw by repetition: 5 g8♕? ♘e6+ 6 ♔e8 ♘c7+.

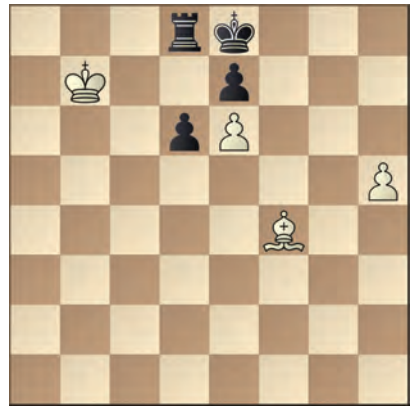
5...♘e6 6 f8♕ ♖xg7+ 7 ♕xg7 ♘xg7 8 ♔xg7 ♔d6 9 ♔f6

And the pawn ending is simply won.

♔ ♔ ♔ ♔ ♔ ♔ ♔ ♔ ♔

Here for you to solve is the study awarded seventh place.

Glafira Kulish
7th Place, YCCC, 2019



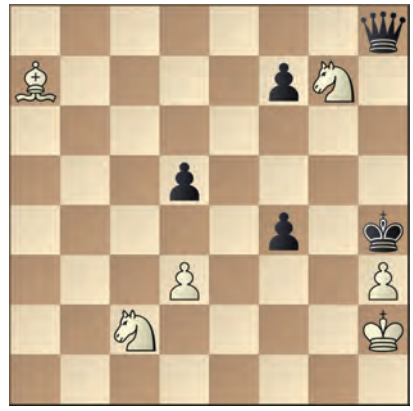
White to play and win

To enter email matt@chess.co.uk or send your name and address, with the main variations, to Chess & Bridge Ltd., 44 Baker Street, London, W1U 7RT, postmarked no later than 1st January. £30 of products from Chess & Bridge are available for the first correct entry drawn.

The winner of the May Studies competition was Miroslav Macek via email.

The solution:

Aleksey Troitzky
Shakhmatny Zhurnal, 1896 (version)



#

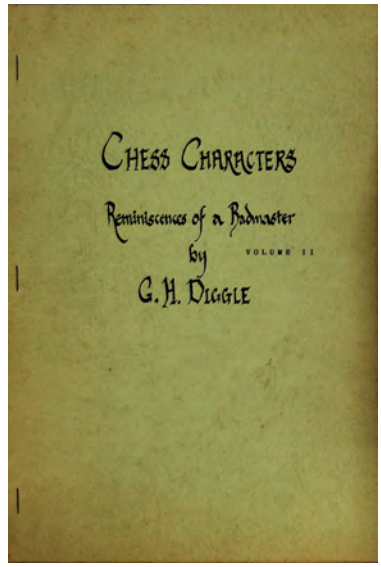
White to play and win

1 ♗d4! ♕d8 2 ♗f2+ ♔g5 3 ♗h4+! ♔xh4 4 ♘d4 ♔g5 5 ♘de6+

Or 5 ♘ge6+ fxe6 6 ♘xe6+, which also wins the black queen and the game.

5...fxe6 6 ♘xe6+

The Good Lady meets the Badmaster



Bob Jones explains how G.H. Diggle became the Badmaster

One of the more unlikely-looking titles on my bookshelf consists of a series of A4 pages of typescript, clipped together down the spine and bearing 100 unconnected articles about various aspects of historical and contemporary chess events and characters. It would be easy to miss were it not for the unusual, seemingly hand-written title, *Reminiscences of A Badmaster by G. H. Diggle*, with the added interest of the signature on the title page – "With all good wishes, from G.H. Diggle, October 1984".

The book's preface explains that back in 1949, the author had sent a Christmas card to C.H.O'D Alexander bearing the moves of a game he had recently lost in seven moves in the London Banks League. In a fine show of his quick wit Alexander sent a card in reply awarding him the title of 'Badmaster', the opposite of, but sounding similar to, the ultimate award of Grandmaster.

Moving on to the early 1970s, the British Chess Federation published a magazine for its members entitled *Newsflash*. D. J. Morgan (father of the writer, politician and historian, Baron Morgan of Aberdovey) had long been writing the Quotes & Queries column in *BCM* to which was later added the responsibility of writing for *Newsflash*. By early 1973 he had decided this was too big a commitment and he continued only with Quotes & Queries, while the Newsflash Editor, Ann Hopton, asked C. H. O'D Alexander if he could take on the job of writing a column.

Alexander declined, stating pressure of work, though unknown to anyone but himself and his doctor, he was in the late stages of cancer and was struggling to complete his existing commitments. He died a few months later. He did, however, recommend the lesser-known Geoffrey Diggle as a possible successor, so she wrote and asked him to submit a test piece, which he duly did. Diggle was no egotist and clearly had a fear and loathing of the capital letter 'I', preferring in his test piece the royal 'We'. However, Ann was not amused and wrote back to say that though she quite liked what he'd written, would he please stop referring to himself as "we". She was not to be trifled with either, as she was also General Secretary of the BCF, its Publicity Officer, Records Secretary and Yearbook Editor.

Ann Hopton was a leading figure in the BCF in the early 1970s and indirectly helped to create the character of 'The Badmaster'.

As an aside at this point, reading an early draft of this article while attending the recent Paignton Congress, Peter Wood of Hastings was reminded of playing in his very first congress as a young man, which also happened to be an early Paignton. At the time, based on his club record, he estimated his grade to be 150-160, but he was put into the lowest section, and shown to his board for his very first congress game. He waited for his opponent to appear and couldn't believe his eyes as a stunning lady walked up and sat opposite him – it was Ann Hopton.

A moment in time 50 years ago that he can recall clearly to this day. As they shook hands, a small army of press photographers crowded in and the next morning her photograph was in all the local papers, her smiling face and the back of Peter's head. That game was drawn, so she was clearly a competent player, though Peter went on to win the section.

Back to the story: Mrs. Hopton had presented Diggle with a problem until he recalled Alexander's sobriquet, and from then on he used that name, or more often, 'BM' for short and wrote about the Badmaster as if it was one of his more flamboyant acquaintances.

In this disguise, he set to work immediately, his first piece being published in July 1974 and a decade later he had reached no. 100. His bright and breezy style, coupled with a deep knowledge of the game's history and a sense of the ridiculous, proved popular and caught the eye of Edward Winter, the Editor of *Chess Notes*, who published the book in question.

None of which explains the Badmaster's back-story. He was born Geoffrey Harber Diggle on 6th December 1902 to John Harber Diggle, a land agent and surveyor, and his wife Katherine (née Lifton), living in the small village of Moulton, near Spalding, deep in the Lincolnshire fens. He attended Spalding Grammar School where he first encountered chess. He then entered Lloyd's Bank and played in various Bank Leagues. Although self-deprecating about his own skills at the game, he did win the Lincolnshire Championship in 1921.

Diggle's first chess books, obtained at age 17, were copies of Staunton's *Handbook* and *The Chess-Player's Companion* after which he was hooked on that particular Golden Age. His later library included works once owned by such luminaries as William Lewis, George Walker and some acquired at the auction of J. Rimington Wilson's great library of over 700 of the finest 19th century chess books. During the war he became a Lance-Corporal and was a member of the West London Club alongside the likes of Sir G.A. Thomas, P.S.

Milner-Barry, Dr. List and J. Gilchrist, receiving frequent mentions in their *War Time Gazette* by C. T. Ley.

The Badmaster was not completely unknown, of course, even before Ann Hopton got her hands on him, as between 1933 and 1973 he had contributed occasional articles and letters to *BCM*. Here is one example of a letter of his to *BCM* from 1950, which hints at both his style and the extent of his mastery of the subject.

Dear Sir,

In Mr. Reinfeld's beautiful Treasury Of British Chess Masterpieces *there are two brilliant Muzios given as match games won by McDonnell against LaBourdonnais. The first is certainly the 54th game of the immortal series; but in the second McDonnell's real opponent (to whom he gave the odds of Queen's Rook) was "Mr. R*ll****n" (probably Rolliston) one of the amiable asterisk-ridden amateurs of the 1830s (see George Walker's* Chess Studies, *Game 202, and Greenwood Walker's* Selection of Games Played by McDonnell; *Book 1 Game No. 4, also the appendix, where "J. Rolliston, Esq.", appears on Greenwood's list of subscribers).*

Mr. Reinfeld is not to blame – the fault lies on this side of the of the Atlantic, where over 60 years ago an English author (no longer here to defend his strange conduct) reprinted the game, cast poor Mr. Rolliston overboard, substituted LaBourdonnais instead, and (most monstrous of all) actually gave McDonnell back his Queen's Rook – as though the great master really needed it! The game has passed for a LaBourdonnais-McDonnell ever since.

Yours faithfully, G. H. Diggle.
7, Gloucester Road. North Harrow.

While humorous himself, Diggle admired the wit of others. In July 1978 he recorded the recent death of D. J. Morgan, who had started *BCM*'s Quotes & Queries feature 25 years earlier, with the words "We offer brief replies to queries of general interest on any aspect of the game. When we fail we will appeal to our readers".

Diggle enjoyed Morgan's replies to some of the questions.

One querist had written in "I first judge a problem by the number of pieces in it".

A: "You doubtless first judge a novel by the number of words in it."

Q: I find it extremely difficult to get boys interested in chess books.

A: Have you tried labelling them "For adults only"?

Q: I have seen no problems by W... Has he been composing in recent years?

A: "Alas! He has been decomposing since 1934".

He died on February 13th 1993 and *BCM* offered a short tribute as follows: *We learn of the death of G. H. Diggle. The name may mean little to modern readers, but under his joke pseudonym "Badmaster" he published many fine articles in the BCF Newsletter. His early contributions to chess history appeared in* BCM *under his own name. A great friend of the late Brian Reilly, also made his 90th birthday before resigning. We shall miss his measured friendly touch.*

We do indeed.

If you come across a copy of *Chess Characters* in a second-hand bookshop, don't dismiss it based on its plain-looking appearance, for inside lies a treasure trove of beautifully-crafted vignettes on an earlier chess world and its inhabitants.

Forthcoming Events

November 4-8 **Royal Beacon Seniors, Exmouth**
www.keverelchess.com; Seniors & 'Junior' sections

November 7 **Hendon 'First Thursday' Blitz**
www.hendonchessclub.com or call 07855 036537

November 8-10 **Torbay Congress, Torquay**
www.torbaycongress.com

November 9-10 **4NCL (Divisions 3 & 4), Doncaster & Maidenhead**
www.4ncl.co.uk or call 01993 708645

November 9 **Golders Green Rapidplay**
goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

November 15-17 **Kilkenny Congress**
www.icu.ie/events/1126

November 15-17 **Oban Congress**
www.chessscotland.com/events/

November 15-17 **Preston Congress**
chess.popmalc.org.uk/congress

November 15-17 **South Wales Autumn Congress**
www.welshchessunion.uk/calendar/ or call 01443 772750

November 16 **UK Blitz Finals, Solihull**
englishchess.org.uk/uk-open-blitz-championships-2019

November 17 **Letchworth Rapidplay**
letchworthchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

November 19 **Muswell Hill Rapidplay**
muswellhillchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

November 22-24 **Dudley Congress**
www.castlechess.co.uk

November 23-24 **British Rapidplay Champs, Pudsey**
www.british-rapidplay.org.uk or call 0113 256 8157

November 23-24 **Cambridgeshire Championships**
Email: info@premierengravinguk.com or call 01733 575544

November 23-24 **Hampstead U2200 Congress**
hampsteadchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

November 23-24 **Ulster Masters, Bangor**
www.ulsterchess.org/events

Nov 29 - Dec 8 **London Chess Classic**
www.londonchessclassic.com; featuring the GCT finals

Nov 30 - Dec 1 **Hereford Congress**
www.cornwallchess.org.uk/Hereford/info.shtml

November 30 **Malawi Rapidplay, Prestwick**
www.chessscotland.com/events/ or call 07876 454863

November 30 **Omagh Rapidplay**
www.ulsterchess.org/events

November 30 **Poplar Rapidplay**
www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub

And for the Online Connoisseur:

November 6-10 **Grand Chess Tour, Bucharest**
grandchesstour.org; Anand, Aronian, Artemiev, Caruana, Karjakin, etc.

November 4-18 **FIDE Grand Prix, Hamburg**
fide.com; Dubov, Grischuk, Radjabov, Vachier-Lagrave, Yu Yangyi, etc.

November 22-26 **Tata Steel Rapid & Blitz, Calcutta**
grandchesstour.org; Anand, Aronian, Carlsen, Ding Liren, Nakamura, etc.

Congress organisers – Don't forget to email editor@chess.co.uk to ensure your event is listed, or if you really want to guarantee a good entry, contact Matt@chess.co.uk to discuss having it advertised.

Fischer confronts his Nemesis...

Writer and club-standard player *James Essinger* boldly takes a look at a famous game between Bobby Fischer and Efim Geller

Did you notice that Ross Poldark is a chess player? In episode three of the apparently final series of the eponymous costume drama *Poldark*, set in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Cornwall, Ross is clearly seen playing chess in one scene.

Well, Cornwall has a subsequent history of producing excellent chess players: the names of Messrs. M. Adams and A. Greet spring to mind. Though in fact I doubt Ross would have had much time to study the game in view of all the energy he needed to devote to running his mines, asserting himself in London in Parliament, spending cosy times with Demelza, and dealing with his nemesis George Warleggan.

This article is about a different kind of nemesis: one of the greatest chess players of the twentieth century, Efim Geller (1925-1998). Highly resilient in defence, wonderfully inventive and ferocious in attack, Geller was Fischer's nemesis in the game we'll be examining and in others. Geller was one of those players who should really have been world champion, but never quite made it.

In looking at this particular game, I'm breaking one of my fundamental rules: namely not to comment – at least not in public – on a game of chess played by players who are both higher-rated than me, which Fischer and Geller certainly were (my current ECF rating is 160). But that, dear reader, is the whole point of this article: without using a computer, I want to look at a fascinating, relatively short game and make some comments on it based simply on how I see the game as a reasonably strong club chess player.

As a matter of fact, this particular game, which only lasts 23 moves, is very much like the kind I used to enjoy playing at Bridge Chess Club near Canterbury before I more or less gave up competitive chess in order to focus on my writing and on my publishing business, The Conrad Press. Indeed, the game reminds me of the kind of game I've played against fellow Bridge players, such as Chris Stampe and Emily Green, with both White and Black. It's a super slugfest in which both players have exciting chances. I've known about the game for many years and noticed it again recently as Game 62 in the recently-published excellent collection of Geller's games entitled *The Nemesis: Geller's Greatest Games* (Quality Chess, 2019).

I'm obviously not going to pretend that I haven't read Geller's own analysis and discussion of the game in that book. In this article, though I refer to his comments occasionally, I look at the game from my own perspective.

This is the kind of game that shows why people get so fascinated by chess. It's beautiful. It features castling on opposite sides, which almost by definition usually leads to an exciting game. Fischer and Geller were and are two of the most exciting players in the history of chess, and at the time of the game both were, at least in principle, at the peak of their powers. The game was played at the Solidarity Tournament in Skopje back in 1967.

Anyway, enough talk, let's get down to the game. Here we go.

R.Fischer-E.Geller
Skopje 1967
Classical Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♗c4

This introduces the Sozin Attack, which Fischer used to love to play.

6...e6 7 ♗e3

I don't know about you, but in club chess players often put the bishop back to b3 before bringing the bishop out to e3 as otherwise it's possible for Black here to try the trick of 7...♘xe4 and then fork the bishop and knight with ...d5. I don't really think that's a very good way of playing because it loosens things up too soon, but it's playable. In any event Geller didn't do that. What he played was an immediate:

7...♗e7 8 ♗b3 0-0 9 ♕e2

As a club player I can see the advantage of this move as it gives White the opportunity to castle on either side. But in my humble opinion, White really is not going to want to castle kingside if he's in his right mind, as it obviously is much better and far more thematic to castle long and launch an attack. So maybe – sorry Bobby, I know I shouldn't suggest moves for you, but this is the whole point of this article – 9 f4 would have been a more interesting move which would then give you, my great departed friend, the opportunity to put your queen on f3.

9...♕a5

A typically bold and brazen Geller move, and quite sensible too as it threatens an immediate ....♘xe4 as the knight on c3 is now pinned.

10 0-0-0

Not so much indirectly defending the pawn on e4 by unpinning the knight on c3 as in effect saying to Geller, 'It's showtime! I'm going to try to mate your king'. Yes, now we're in for a lot of fun because Bobby's indeed obviously going to try and mate the black king and Efim is clearly going to try to do the same to Bobby's monarch.

10...♘xd4

I've never liked this move in any version of the Sicilian, particularly not in the Sicilian Dragon where it always seems to me dreadfully committal and rather silly to give White the opportunity to put his dark-squared bishop on d4. Surely the point of the Sicilian is for Black to maintain as much tension on the queenside against White as possible? I think it's fair to say that, in the 1960s, an exchange on d4 in this kind of position was regarded as perfectly playable, but today it wouldn't be seen in quite the same light, the Sicilian Defence from the black side now being better understood.

11 ♗xd4 ♗d7 12 ♔b1

As is well known, this is a neat and often important move to play after you castle long. With it, you're protecting the a-pawn with

your king and also guarding against possible checks from a black bishop which might conceivably come to g5 at some point. You're also getting your king off the potentially dangerous c-file.

12...♗c6

Geller himself gives a question mark to this in his discussion of the game. I'm not going to repeat what he said because that's not fair. You ought to buy the book. But this move seems perfectly fine to me as it brings his light-squared bishop on to the long diagonal and keeps an eye on the pawn on e4, which of course is not attacked for the moment as there are two white pieces guarding it.

13 f4

Again a kind of club game move with White starting off hostilities in earnest on the kingside. When playing either side of this kind of position where each side has castled on opposite wings, it is absolutely crucial to avoid wasting time; indeed, the winner usually turns out to be the player who has wasted the least.

13...♖ad8

I'm not exactly sure why Geller put his queen's rook here rather than the king's rook, but presumably he wanted the latter to stay where it was, in case it might be used for defence. Right now, I like White's position more than Black's. Black's position is OK, but it gives a sense of Geller waiting to see what Fischer is going to do rather than having much in the way of plans of his own.

14 ♖hf1

I suppose Fischer had a choice here between putting his rook on g1 rather than f1. Locating it on g1 might have been better, as there the rook supports the g2-g4 advance and in some variations White could put his queen's rook on f1 to power down to the black king like two chessical laser beams.

14...b5

This is the obvious move for Geller to play, but actually there isn't much else he *can* do because there's no point in moving his pawns in front of his king as that would only weaken his king's position and also waste time. Geller's ...b5 shows he is as serious about attacking as Fischer is.

15 f5

This seems to be the right way to pursue the attack as Black cannot play 15...e5 without creating a horrible hole on d5. Now, if Fischer plays an early g2-g4, then he's going to have a ready-made attack on the g-file, although again that makes me wonder why he didn't put his rook there to support it.

Efim Geller (right) en route to defeating Holland's Kick Langeweg at the 1962 Varna Olympiad.

15...b4

Well, Geller was never a wimp and always liked to take a fight to his opponent. Though in fact, there again isn't really much else he could do other than this advance which forces White's hand, as the knight on c3 cannot move without jettisoning the pawn on e4, which would be disastrous.

16 fxe6

Fischer sacrifices a piece. Did he have to? Well, certainly we can assume he saw this move when he played 15 f5, if not before. I don't know if the sacrifice is objectively sound, but it certainly looks as if it should be.

16...bxc3

When Black gets a pawn to c3 in this kind of position the attacking and indeed mating possibilities of his position start to look alarming, which indeed they are. But I still think Fischer must have felt very confident as he played his next move, which is, of course,

17 exf7+ ♔h8

Let's have a good look at this position now and see what we think. Does White really have much on the kingside? One of my thoughts about this game, which I've played through on several occasions before, but this is the first time I've written it up for this august journal, is that there may be something of a chimera about White's attack. Although it looks impressive, Black is in fact quite well protected and as is sometimes the case, the advanced white pawn – in this case on f7 – is actually getting in the way of White's own pieces.

18 ♖f5

Forgive me, but why can't Fischer simply play 18 ♗xc3 in this position? The queen is immediately attacked and so Black can't capture the pawn on e4. Maybe Fischer was afraid of the black queen coming over to the kingside and doing mischief there and maybe he was right; I'm not a sufficiently good chess player to really know. But 18 ♖f5 seems, don't you think, a tad artificial, even though it is on the face of it a nice-looking move?

This is what I mean by this game being susceptible to analysis by a club player. Even though it is between two great and indeed legendary players, I still feel they were neither at their best on this day. Moreover, I think 18 ♗xc3 surely must be perfectly playable even without the hindsight of what happened later in the game, although it must be said that Geller doesn't mention 18 ♗xc3 as a possibility for White at all.

18...♕b4!

I've given this an exclamation mark not because Geller does (although he does), but because it's clearly a nice aggressive move that exploits the fact that it is now impossible for White to play 19 ♗xc3, because of course the pawn on e4 would fall. I wonder whether Fischer regretted, when he saw Geller's 18...♕b4, not having taken the pawn on c3 with his bishop, and also Fischer's rook on f5 doesn't seem to be doing very much at the moment.

19 ♕f1

Fischer himself says that this was a hard move for him to find and explains that it took about 45 minutes for him to do so. With the greatest respect to a man who is one of my chess heroes, can putting your queen on f1 in the middlegame when you are White really be much good? Her Majesty looks to me as if she isn't going anywhere, or at least not yet: she seems to have embarked on a Thomas Cook holiday. Still, as Fischer himself notes,

19 ♕f1 does threaten 20 ♖xf6 which would win, as the rook can't be taken or Black would be mated. The problem is that Geller is allowed to move too.

19...♘xe4

This looks pretty good, if once more fairly obvious to me, taking the long-threatened king's pawn and also threatening 20...♘d2+, which would win the exchange. I don't really see what White's going to do now. His queen and rook 'combination' along the f-file doesn't look very effective, especially now that the centre has now abruptly opened up.

20 a3?

Again, I'm annotating this game as a mere club player; I'll never be a legendary chess player, but this move looks really terrible to me. I'm sure if Chris Stampe and I were playing through this game, either with White or Black, we would instantly think that 20 a3 is a dreadful mistake. OK, Fischer drives the queen away briefly (arguably to a better square), but it weakens the White king's position horribly. It is also, more fundamentally, a time-wasting move: White should be attacking, not defending. 20 a3? is like putting up some barrage balloons when you ought to be launching D-Day. Just about the only good thing the move has going for it is that right now Black can't play 20...♘d2+?? because his own queen is, of course, attacked.

20...♕b7

What on earth is Fischer supposed to do at this point? He actually doesn't have any threats, although it's true that the black knight on e4 still can't go back to f6 because it would simply be taken. But that's about it, really. The queen on f1 is still on her holiday and the rook on f5 is essentially just in the way. If you think I'm being too hard on Fischer then maybe you're right, but I just don't see why he let himself get into this position in the first place.

21 ♕f4

So the queen boards a repatriation flight. Well, this has the advantage of making Black's threat of ...♘d2+ less effective as the king can now simply move. But, again, I'm not really sure where this queen is going. I rather suspect this position is lost for White, as he's a piece down and doesn't really have anything immediate. Or does he?

21...♗a4!

Geller gives this two exclamation marks, but I'm only giving it one as it's pretty obvious really. The white bishop on b3 is now pinned due to the mate threat. Also, as the bishop is defending the pawn on f7, Geller unsurprisingly wants to exchange off the prelate as soon as feasible.

All right, so here we are after Geller has placed his bishop to a4 and let's imagine you're playing White. What do you do now? Well, the first and obvious question to ask is, how about 22 ♗xg7+? After the forced reply 22...♔xg7 does White have anything? The answer, alas if you're White, would appear to be no, as after 23 ♕g4+ ♔h8 White has nothing at all and it's basically game over. Anyway, Fischer did at least now play a move that had a direct threat.

22 ♕g4

But it's all too slow.

22...♗f6

Geller gives this move an exclamation mark in his notes, but it's such an evidently necessary move that I won't. I just think Fischer did not play very incisively in this game since 18 ♖f5, or maybe the truth of the matter is that the Sozin variation against the Sicilian is not really all that good and that Fischer's many great victories playing it were because his opponents did not play as simply, calmly and accurately as Geller did here.

And I think that's really the point about Geller's play: it looks easy and in fact it is. He's simply doing what every chess player should do, which is to place their pieces on effective squares and have a clear plan, which in this case is to checkmate the white king.

In this position I don't see what White has at all. The f6-square, which has been so vital to the entire game, is under lock and key by Geller and it is now White who is in the most parlous position, which he wouldn't be if his pawn was still on a2 rather than a3. If it was, there would be no immediate threat by Black and Fischer might have time to regroup, but it's too late for that. As we all know, in chess sometimes the best move of a pawn is one square backwards! That's all very well, but it's against the rules.

Fischer now plays the desperate...

23 ♖xf6

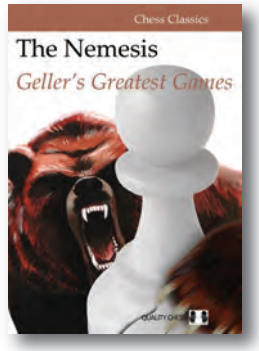
...which is easily countered by 23...♘xf6, if Geller wanted to play that, but he's got an even stronger move:

23...♗xb3! 0-1

Geller awards this an exclamation mark, and I will too. He is threatening to mate Fischer in two moves with 24...♗a2+ and if Fischer were to try 24 cxb3 then after 24...♕xb3 pretty much the only way that the mate on b2 could be guarded against would be by 25 ♕e2, whereupon Black could simply play 25...♘xf6 and be a whole rook up. If the white pawn on f7 were still protected by a bishop on b3, Fischer could have had some fun with 25 ♕xg7+ and then a discovered check by 26 ♖xd6+, but the pawn on f7 is no longer overprotected and so the rook would need to go along the f-file, which doesn't lead to anything. After 23...♗xb3! Fischer resigned and I think anybody would in this position.

So, a fascinating, but rather strange game where Fischer was made to look rather ordinary by Geller's simple and clear logical play. Also, of course, the game shows the incredible power of the Sicilian Defence, at least when up against a white king that has castled queenside.

As for my comments, maybe I haven't missed anything too major. Or perhaps I have. In any case, this game is, as I've said, the kind of chess I love. I think if Ross Poldark had been playing the black pieces against his long-term nemesis George Warleggan, Ross would justifiably think this a wonderful victory and something to tell Demelza about that evening when he returned home, and to remember down the years as Ross and Demelza grew happily old together.



Ed. – The Nemesis: Geller's Greatest Games *(Quality Chess, 480 pages) can be purchased from Chess & Bridge by Subscribers for the special price of £23.85 until November 30th.*

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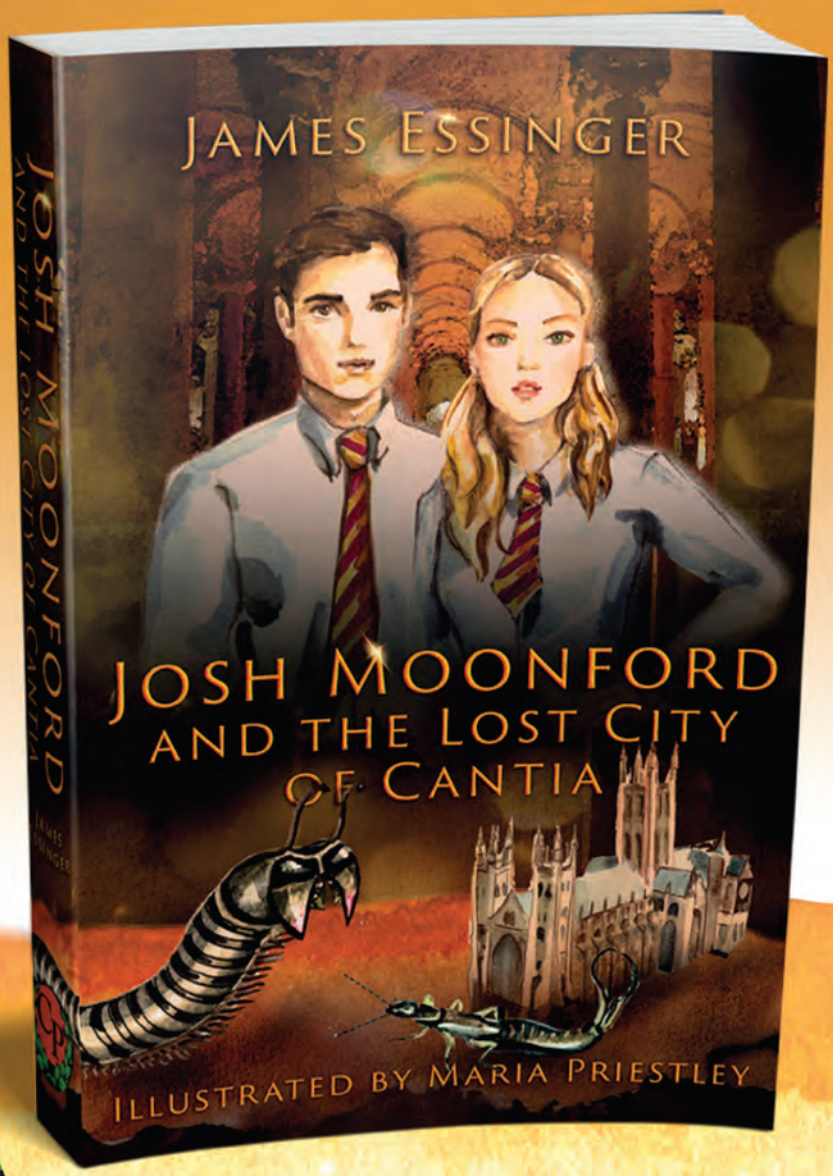

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An Introduction to Prophylaxis

In the first of two articles, IM Jose L. Vilela explains all about this important concept, one which has confused many a player since Nimzowitsch's day

"As I have several times observed, neither the attack nor defence is, in my opinion, a matter properly pertaining to positional play, which is instead an energetic and systematic application of prophylactic measures. What is important above all else is to blunt the edge of certain possibilities which in a positional sense would be undesirable."

Aaron Nimzowitsch, *My System*

An enigmatic statement this from Aaron Nimzowitsch, not least when it appeared in 1925 when his readers would have been unfamiliar with such concepts as prophylaxis in the then limited chess literature. Fortunately, later on, Nimzowitsch clarifies things with: "One of these is the possibility of the opponent making a 'freeing' pawn move."

A 'freeing pawn move' is generally a break involving an advance of a pawn that allows the activation of pieces which had limited scope before the freeing move. Here is a very simple, classic example from the Queen's Gambit.

F.Marshall-J.R.Capablanca
11 matchgame, New York 1909

13...c5!

A liberating and very obvious move, which opens the great light-squared diagonal for the black bishop to exert activity down it. That is achieved even with a gain of tempo, as the bishop threatens the white queen. Additionally the white centre is challenged and the c6-square is cleared for the black knight.

Of course, it is only necessary to avoid a liberating break when it really is satisfactory for the opponent to execute it. There are cases in which the apparently positive break turns against its executor, like a boomerang. Nimzowitsch contributes an instructive enough example in *My* System.

Apparently Black has at his disposition the freeing break ...e6-e5, a move that would open the c8-h3 diagonal for the queen's bishop. Nevertheless, if the consequences of that advance are carefully considered, one can reach the conclusion that it is not satisfactory for Black. That's why, in spite of being able to prevent it with 1 ♖e1, White decides to ignore it instead, while reinforcing the protection of the pawn on c5 and at the same time initiating action on the queen's flank with his pawns – a very logical follow-up if one takes into account that White has a space advantage and a pawn majority in that sector of the board.

1 b4 e5? 2 dxe5 ♘xe5 3 ♗f4! ♘xf3+ 4 ♕xf3 (Black's queen is under attack) **4...♕d8** and now **5 h3** prevents ...♗g4 and intends to continue with ♖ad1, putting pressure on the now isolated pawn on d5. Eventually White could also block the IQP with a minor piece on d4. In short, the resulting position after the freeing move favours White, so it was definitely the correct decision not to prevent ...e6-e5.

Returning to the key concept of liberating moves, here is an example that is useful, additionally, for explaining a term that can be found with a certain frequency in Nimzowitsch's writings.

M.Vukic-D.Davcevski
Yugoslav Ch., Bjelovar 1979

This is a position originating from the Dutch Stonewall. The most usual plan for White in this kind of situation is to attack on the queen's flank through a pawn avalanche, which is usually preceded by seizing space in that sector of the board with the advance c4-c5. However, if White plays 1 c5 immediately, Black has the possibility of executing a freeing break in the centre with 1...♗xf3! 2 ♗xf3 (or 2 exf3 e5! 3 ♖e1 e4! with a good game for Black) 2...e5! 3 dxe5 ♘xe5, thereby obtaining a completely satisfactory position.

Hence Vukic decided first to prevent the break ...e6-e5 (notice that it is not possible to prevent it by 1 ♘e5 because the pawn on e2 is hanging), and to that purpose he executed what Nimzowitsch called a "mysterious rook move". The rook is placed not only on a file that is closed, but one that White is unable to open in the short term. The essential objective is to answer an eventual black minor piece exchange on f3 with the recapture exf3!, opening the e-file when all of a sudden the white rook finds itself

exerting great pressure, not only on e5, but also against Black's backward pawn on e6.

After **14 ♖e1!** Black answered **14...a5** and now it was definitely the time for White to follow with his plan of expansion on the queenside with **15 c5**. If now 15...♗xf3? 16 exf3! with a clear positional advantage for White.

Observe the impossibility of the ...e6-e5 break and the pressure against e6 generated by the white rook.

The author of *My System* supplies the following notable example of a "mysterious rook move".

H.Von Gottschall-A.Nimzowitsch
Hanover 1926

The position is quite level. There is material equality and the presence of opposite-coloured bishops is a factor that tends to make endgames drawish. If any advantage could be mentioned it is the fact that while it is nearly impossible for White to use his pawn majority on the queenside to create a passed pawn (observe the black pawn on a4 fixing the two white pawns), Black can achieve a passed pawn on the kingside with relative ease (on the e-file). However, if Black tries to create such a pawn right away with 28...e5, after 29 fxe5 fxe5 30 ♖d6 his king finds itself cut off by White's rook and cannot be activated.

As a first step, which is an underlying principle of the endgame, Black will try to activate his king, placing it on f5. However, if for such a purpose he immediately goes 28...♔g6 then White answers 29 g4!, preventing ...♔f5 and after 29...hxg4 30 hxg4 when Black occupies the h-file with 30...♖h8, White plays 31 ♔g3! preventing the rook from penetrating to h2 or h3.

That's why Nimzowitsch first executed a mysterious rook move with the aim only of preventing White from playing g3-g4, so that the black king could reach the desired f5-square:

28...♖h8!

Notice that g3-g4 is prevented because after the exchange of pawns and the opening of the h-file, the black rook would invade on h2, thereby winning material.

29 ♖d1

Better was 29 ♖d6, mounting some resistance against Black's idea of activating the king.

29...♔g6 30 ♖d4 ♔f5 31 ♗d2

Now Nimzowitsch played another mysterious move with his rook:

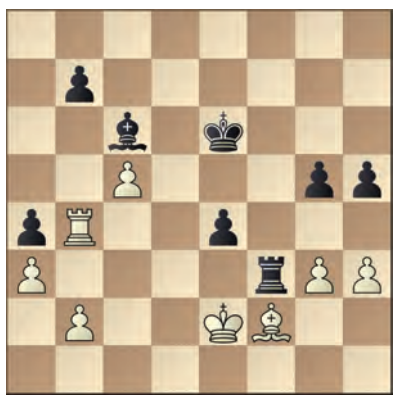
31...♖f8!

In this case the move is not directed against the possibility of the adversary opening the f-file, rather it is Black himself who will produce a break with his pawns to open that file, and therefore he prepares the rook for the action. It is very important too for the reader to notice that 31...e5 32 fxe5 fxe5 33 g4+ hxg4 34 hxg4+ followed by 35 ♖d6+ does not lead Black anywhere.

32 ♗e1?! e5 33 fxe5 fxe5 34 ♖h4 g5! 35 ♖b4

It is not possible to capture on h5 due to 35...♔g6+, winning the rook.

35...♔e6+ 36 ♔e2 e4 37 ♗f2 ♖f3



Although there is still a long road to victory (which Nimzowitsch achieved 22 moves later), there is no doubt that Black has made a lot of progress over the previous 10 moves thanks to his fine prophylactic play.

The following explanation from Nimzowitsch in *My System* will certainly help the reader to better understand the central idea:

"The 'mysterious' Rook move places our Rook on a closed file, which can only be opened by the enemy himself (and if he does not our Rook is left standing there with nothing to do). Such a move must never be played, except consciously and with the intention of sacrificing some of the Rook's effective strength. This sacrifice is made in order to prevent an enemy freeing manoeuvre, or at any rate to render it difficult."

Let's move on to the second meaning that Nimzowitsch bestowed on prophylaxis:

"It is much more difficult to grasp the idea of interior prophylactic, for here we are speaking of an entirely new conception."

"The evil consists in this: Our pieces are out of, or in insufficient contact with their own strategically important points."

"Since I conceived of this condition as an evil, I was led to advance the strategic proposition that one must overprotect his own strategically important points, by providing defence in excess of attack, to lay up a reserve of defence."

Aron Nimzowitsch (1886-1935), whose classic work My System *continues to polarise opinion, partly due to its terminology.*

This is nothing else than the famous 'overprotection', one of Nimzowitsch's best-known and most controversial concepts. So controversial that, amongst other things, it gave rise to an ironical and hilarious parody by Hans Kmoch, which was published all around the world. When some 70 years after Nimzowitsch, John Watson wrote his renowned work *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy*, with its subtitle 'Advances since Nimzowitsch', he referred to the subject in a balanced form, that in my opinion reflects the reality about this concept: "Overprotection has always been a rather vague idea, and only seems applicable to a narrow set of circumstances."

Among the situations in which this notion of overprotection can be successfully applied, one should acknowledge that the game

Nimzowitsch-Alekhine, Baden-Baden 1925, as featured by Nimzowitsch in *My System*, is a good example.

White has some advantage due to his greater space and strong centre. It is important for White to keep his d-pawn on d4, at least for the moment, with the aim of restricting the activity of Black's bishop and also that of the knight on c6. Observe that, if White were to play d4-d5 at some moment, the g1-a7 diagonal would open for the black bishop, and the threatened black knight would be actively posted on the central square, e5. Thus White applies a strategy of overprotecting the d-pawn:

15 ♖ad1 ♖ae8 16 ♖d2 ♕g5 17 ♖fd1 ♗a7 18 ♘f4 ♘f5

Nimzowitsch does not explain why Black did not capture on d4, which seems necessary to me since things are not as simple as they may seem at first sight. If 18...♗xd4 19 ♘e4! (with a double attack) 19...♕f5 20 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 21 ♕xd4 ♘c6! 22 ♘xd6! when White will win a pawn, while obtaining an unquestionable advantage.

19 ♘b5

The d4 point is protected by five pieces.

19...♗b8

A sad position for the bishop, but if 19...♗b6 20 ♘d5 when White threatens to capture on c7, as well as go ♘xb6, wrecking Black's pawn structure.

20 ♘d5

Nimzowitsch recommends 20 ♖e2 followed by 21 ♖ae1, which is good for White, but the text is also strong.

20...♖e6

Here White could have obtained a clear advantage with 21 ♘bxc7.

In 1963 a book appeared on the scene, which contained very wide aspirations with regards to the conceptual foundations of chess, namely *Modern Chess Strategy* by the Czech GM Ludek Pachman. In it, although Pachman does not mention the word 'prophylaxis', he does use the term "preventive defence" and additionally he devotes some lines to overprotection.

The following comparison by Pachman between ideas related to chess and to medicine is instructive.

"Just as in modern medical science more and more emphasis is being laid on the prevention of illness, so too in modern chess strategy preventive measures are frequently employed to meet an enemy attack before it has fully developed. By preventive defence we mean the strengthening of weak points in advance of an enemy attack; the possibility of tactical threats is eliminated before they can develop."

In other words, preventive defence is prophylaxis in a wider sense than in the original definition by Nimzowitsch, and above all, from the point of view of defence.

It is worth seeing some classic examples of a preventive defence. First of all let's observe Capablanca in action.

A.Kupchik-J.R.Capablanca
Lake Hopatcong 1926

Black's space advantage on the queenside suggests an offensive on that flank through a pawn avalanche. The white bishop on b5 contributes to that avalanche, as it will be attacked when the black pawns advance. If Capablanca had focused only on his possibilities on the queen's flank, the game could have continued in the following way: 19...a6 20 ♗a4 b5 21 ♗c2 a5 22 h3 ♗c6 (a preparatory move for the break ...b5-b4; the b-file is cleared so that it can be occupied by a black rook, and the a4-e8 diagonal is put under his control) 23 g4.

In the position that arises, while Black will assume the initiative on the queen's flank, White will create counterplay on the kingside.

It is for that reason that Capablanca, before undertaking action on the left wing, decided to prevent completely the possibility of White creating counterplay on the king-side. He did it by controlling the g4-square:

19...h5! 20 ♖ef1 ♖h6

Another mysterious rook move. Its intention is to completely discourage an eventual break on g4. Of course, White could not play it right away, but it definitely could become feasible after a regrouping of the pieces. However, after Capablanca's 20...♖h6, any advance with g2-g4 would only end up allowing Black to take control of the h-file after ...hxg4.

21 ♗e1 g6

This move consolidates the h5-pawn, but it gives a visually negative impression, in the sense that the rook on h6 seems to become isolated from the fighting scene. However, Capablanca corrects that defect with his next move.

22 ♗h4 ♔f7!

Now the black rook can, at an opportune moment, co-ordinate its action with the rest of Black's pieces by means of ...♖hh8.

23 ♕e1 a6

After the patient previous preparation, Black moves on to launch the assault on

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Jose Raul Capablanca was a master of preventative defence, which is essentially prophylaxis.

the queenside.

24 ♗a4 b5 25 ♗d1 ♗c6 26 ♖h3 a5 27 ♗g5 ♖hh8 28 ♕h4

It looks like Kupchik is trying to frighten his opponent, but the black's king position is completely impregnable.

28...b4 29 ♕e1

The start of the total retreat of forces from the king's flank by White recognises the failure of his strategy.

29...♖b8 30 ♖hf3 a4 31 ♖3f2 a3! 32 b3 cxb3 33 ♗xb3 ♗b5! 34 ♖g1 ♕xc3 35 ♕xc3 bxc3 36 ♖c2 ♖hc8 37 ♗h4 ♗d3 38 ♖cc1 ♖xb3! 39 axb3 a2 0-1

White resigned in view of the threat ...♗b1 and because Black's passed pawns will quickly decide the issue.

Now let us observe Nimzowitsch preventing an eventual enemy pawn avalanche.

A.Nimzowitsch-J.Bernstein
Karlsbad 1923

Black has just advanced his pawn to e4, gaining space in the centre and on the king's flank, so from a strategic point of view the most logical plan, after White's f3-knight moves away, would be to prepare an advance of the f-pawn, aiming to eventually break through with ...f5-f4. Nimzowitsch executes a regrouping of his pieces in order to prevent this key break.

12 ♘h4! ♘b8 13 g3 ♘e8 14 ♘g2 f5 15 h4

Note how, with his last few moves, White has prevented Black's planned expansion on the kingside. With his last move White secures the f4-square as outpost for his king's knight.

15...♗d8 16 a4

After controlling the eventual break on the right wing, White launches an offensive on the queen's flank, which is the sector of the board where he has a space advantage. It is worth noticing that, in contrast to Kupchik-Capablanca as we have just studied, in this case the first player must be careful with his offensive as his king is placed in the same sector of the board as where his pawns must advance.

16...b6 17 b5 ♘f6 18 ♘f4 axb5 19 axb5 ♕f7 20 ♗e2 ♗c7 21 cxb6 ♗xf4?

Preferable would have been 21...♗xb6.

22 gxf4 ♗d7 23 ♔d2

A little bird just told me

A round-up of what the top players and chess personalities have been saying on Twitter

Tarjei J. Svensen - @TarjeiJS
"An amazing performance" and "an absolutely deserved winner" is the verdict from the World Champion as Teimour Radjabov goes to win #FIDEWorldCup, which must be his greatest achievement since sharing 1st in Wijk aan Zee 2007, 4 points ahead of Carlsen.

Nikita Vitiugov - @N_Vitiugov
This tournament is like life - eventually, it has a sad end. Lucky guys leave it quickly, stubborn ones, who fight on their limits - sometimes painfully. But what happened here also matters and I am proud of the level of chess I've showed in the tournament (not today) :-).

Yan Nepomniachtchi - @lachesisq
Little bit sad to leave #FIDEWorldCup after having nearly winning positions in both games, but this is what KO system about. Finally some rest is ahead :) #chess

Chess24.com - @chess24com
Magnus Carlsen: "If the question is whether I think Kasparov or Fischer was greater I think no serious chess player or historian thinks that Fischer is greater in a historical context than Kasparov." #FIDEWorldCup #c24live

Mark Crowther - @MarkTWIC
25 Years of The Week in Chess. An article on my 25th Anniversary - includes a listing of every single issue so far, the number of games and stories.

Chessable - @chessable
We have a very exciting release coming later today from the brilliant @erwinlami on a spicy new line that was played in the FIDE Grand Prix this year. Stay tuned!

Simon Williams - @ginger_gm
Finished filming a DVD on the Budapest Gambit for @ChessBase. Now onto the Good Knight pub in Oslo for a weekend of chess and maybe the odd beer... Can't wait!

David Howell - @DavidHowellGM
What are the odds? In the summer I got lost in London and bumped into GM Jonathan Parker who gave me directions. Today, while shopping, I stumbled across Emil Sutovsky, GM & director general of @FIDE_chess. London becoming the chess capital? #smallworld

London Chess Classic @london_chess
Roll up, roll up! The 11th London Chess Classic (November 29-December 8, 2019) is now live and accepting online entries for Festival Events (total prize fund £27,000) here: www.londonchessclassic.com

In this situation the king will be safe in the centre of the board.

23...cxb5 24 ♖a1 ♘c6 25 ♗xb5 ♘a5 26 ♗e2 ♖fb8 27 ♘a4 ♗xa4 28 ♖xa4 ♖xb6 29 ♗c3 ♘b3+ 30 ♕xb3 ♖xb3 31 ♖xa8 + ♘e8 32 ♗d1!

The bishop is heading for a4.

32...♖xc3 33 ♔xc3 ♕c7 + 34 ♔d2 ♔f7 35 ♗h5+ g6 36 ♖ha1

Now ♖a7 is threatened.

36...♕b6 37 ♗e2 ♔g7 38 ♔e1 ♘c7 39 ♖8a5 ♔h6 40 ♔f1

And now safety is found on the kingside.

40...♕b3 41 h5 ♘e8 42 ♖a6 ♕b2 43 hxg6 hxg6 44 ♖6a2 ♕b7 45 ♖a7 ♕b2 46 ♔g2 ♘f6 47 ♖h1+ ♘h5 48 ♗xh5 gxh5 49 ♖ha1 1-0

Probably the greatest all-time craftsman of preventative defence was the legendary Armenian World Champion Tigran Petrosian. An example from his practice excellently complements any exposition on the subject.

A.Pomar-T.V.Petrosian
Siegen Olympiad 1970

White has some advantage in terms of development and space. Moreover, Black cannot castle immediately because the bishop on d7 is faced by White's major pieces on the d-file. Petrosian now devises a very original plan, which involves activating his queen's rook in a very unusual way.

14...♖b8!? 15 ♖he1 ♖b7

Here is the idea: the black rook is placed on the seventh rank where it defends the bishop on d7, rendering castling possible. But the sense of the position of the rook goes beyond the simple overprotection of the bishop, as in this position the rook is ready for multiple defensive tasks along the seventh rank, among which is also the opportune defence of the e7-pawn and even an eventual transfer of the rook to the kingside. I would also like to mention that Black is now ready to double his rooks on the d-file or any other file which opens.

16 e5

White decides to sacrifice a pawn. In return he manages to open the long light-squared diagonal for his bishop and clears the e4-square as an outpost for a minor piece. However, on the other hand, Black obtains an outpost on d4 and the f-file is partially opened for his use.

16...fxe5

It is not possible to capture twice with a knight on e5, as after 16...♘fxe5 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5? 18 ♗xb7 an exchange is lost.

17 ♘g5 0-0 18 ♘d5 ♘xg5 19 ♗xg5 ♗e8

Observe how the rook continues being useful on b7, now defending the e7-pawn. Black is also ready to dislodge the white knight with ...e6, after which the seventh rank will be cleared and the rook will be able to move over to the kingside.

20 ♗h6 e6! 21 ♗xg7 ♖xg7

The performance of the rook has been excellent. Now it is ready to be doubled on the semi-open f-file.

22 ♘c3 ♘d4!

Petrosian makes sure of installing his knight on the strong central outpost before undertaking other actions, without caring about returning the extra pawn on e5.

23 ♖xe5 ♖gf7

Now Black seizes the initiative, thanks to the pressure on White's f-pawn.

24 ♘e4?

Pomar does not realise the dangers of imprisonment for his rook on e5 and commits a decisive mistake.

24...♕c7! 25 ♖g5 ♖f4!

Suddenly the white rook is locked up and there is no defence against the modest pawn move ...h6.

26 ♕d3 h6 27 ♘d6 hxg5 28 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 29 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 30 ♕xg5 ♕h7+ 0-1

♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘ ♘

The Trends in Chess Openings

The top twenty openings as played by International Masters and Grandmasters in September

1	⇧	Queen's Gambit Declined	*94 games*
2	⇩	Reti Opening	*91 games*
3	⇧	King's Indian Defence	*77 games*
4	⇩	Caro-Kann Defence	*73 games*
5	⇩	Slav Defence	*72 games*
6	⇧	English, 1...e5	*69 games*
7	⇩	Nimzo-Indian Defence	*65 games*
8	⇩	1 d4 ♘f6 sidelines	*57 games*
9	⇩	Sicilian, Najdorf	*57 games*
10	⇧	Ruy Lopez, Berlin Def.	*47 games*
11	=	Grünfeld Def., Classical	*46 games*
12	⇧	Catalan Opening	*44 games*
13	⇧	Petroff Def., 3 ♘xe5	*43 games*
14	⇧	Queen's Indian Defence	*43 games*
15	⇩	1 d4 d5 sidelines	*42 games*
16	⇩	Sicilian, 2 ♘f3 sidelines	*40 games*
17	⇩	English, 1...♘f6	*38 games*
18	⇩	English, 1...c5	*37 games*
19	⇩	Giuoco Piano	*33 games*
20	⇩	English, 1...e6	*30 games*

1,972 games played between 1-30 September where both players were rated over 2400 Elo

Source: TWIC.
Compiled by *HIARCS 14.*

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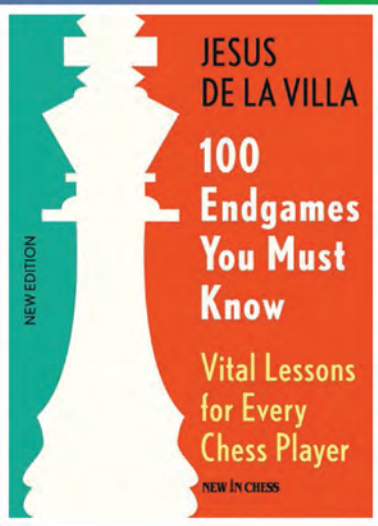
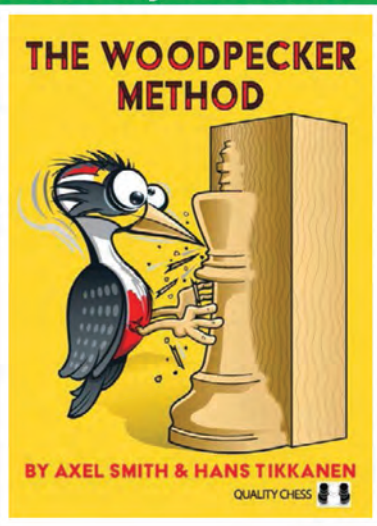
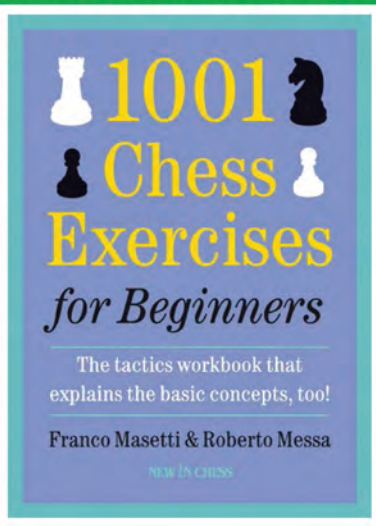
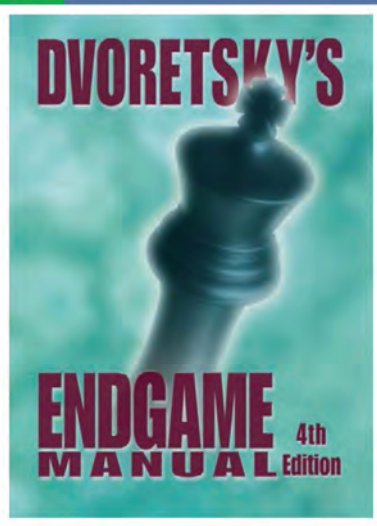








Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability, with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. The games come from many recent events, not least the Sinquefield and FIDE World Cups. Don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just win a pawn.

Solutions on page 53.

Warm-up Puzzles

(1) R.A.Barton-A.Roy
Major Open, Torquay 2019
Black to Play

(2) K.Alekseenko-V.Fedoseev
Russian Championship, Izhevsk 2019
White to Play

(3) K.Arkell-M.Waddington
Paignton 2019
White to Play

(4) A.Balaji-O.Pollack
Major Open, Torquay 2019
White to Play

(5) E.Can-I.Saric
Turkish Super League 2019
Black to Play

(6) P.Shaw-T.Hilton
Major Open, Torquay 2019
White to Play

Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 53

(7) O.Robson-D.Wright
Bradford 2019
Black to Play

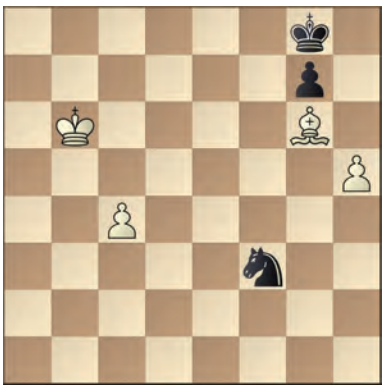
(8) R.Eames-M.Ashworth
Major Open, Torquay 2019
Black to Play

(9) T.Polak-M.Demidov
Trnava 2019
White to Play

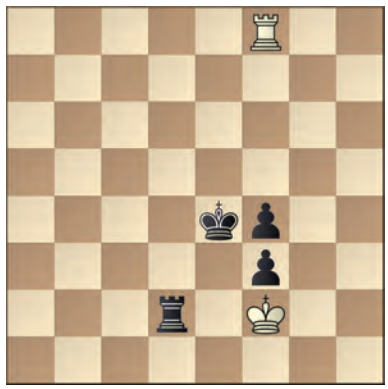
(10) H.Der Manuelian-V.Mikhalevski
Sturbridge 2019
Black to Play

(11) M.Vachier-Lagrave-L.Dominguez Perez
Saint Louis (rapid) 2019
White to Play

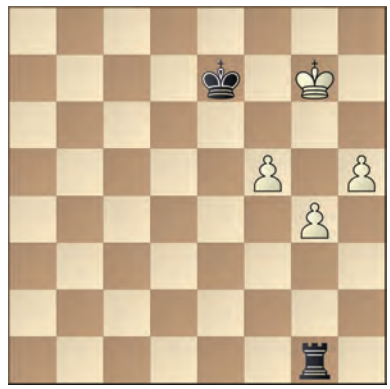
(12) J.Fathallah-R.Eames
Major Open, Torquay 2019
Black to Play



(13) M.Nayhebaver-W.Sapis
Polish Team Championship 2019
Black to Play and Draw

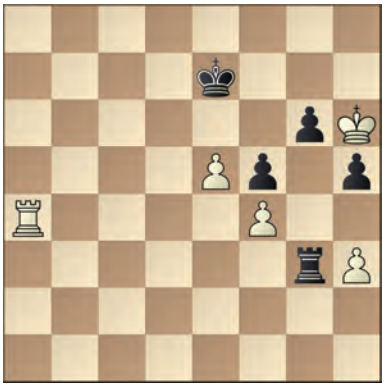


(14) A.Sarana-E.Inarkiev
Russian Ch., Izhevsk 2019
White to Play and Draw



(15) A.Giri-J.K.Duda
Internet (rapid) 2019
White to Play and Draw

Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 53



(16) A.Giri-I.Nepomniachtchi
Saint Louis 2019
White to Play

(17) S.Karjakin-M.Vachier-Lagrave
Saint Louis 2019
White to Play

(18) G.Jones-D.Jakovenko
FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019
Black to Play and Draw

(19) A.Escobar Forero-L.Dominguez Perez
FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019
White to Play

(20) L.Yankelevich-M.Perez Candelario
Portuguese Team Championship 2019
White to Play and Draw

(21) Zou Chen-S.P.Sethuraman
Changsha 2019
Black to Play

(22) P.Svidler-C.Albornoz Cabrera
FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019
White to Play

(23) V.Anand-W.So
Saint Louis 2019
White to Play

(24) F.Caruana-I.Nepomniachtchi
Saint Louis 2019
Black to Play

Overseas News

GREECE – The latest rating list appeared courtesy of the FIDE Secretariat in Athens on October 1st. After the Skolkovo Women's Grand Prix (see below), while Hou Yifan remains clear at the top of the women's list on 2659, the battle for second spot is quite close, Ju Wenjun still holding that with her 2586, with Humpy Koneru now up to 2577 and Aleksandra Goryachkina down to 2575 followed by a bit of a gap to the 2552-rated Mariya Muzychuk.

That rating list did not include the results of the World Cup, which only concluded on October 4th. As we prepared to go to press after five rounds of the Grand Swiss on the Isle of Man, Ding Liren, while still third, had fallen 17 points behind 2818-rated Fabiano Caruana, who was in turn 54 points adrift of Magnus Carlsen. Meanwhile Teimour Radjabov's success in Khanty-Mansiysk had lifted him back into the top-ten, slotting in on the live list on 2767 in ninth place between Alexander Grischuk and Levon Aronian.

INDIA – Pre-tournament favourite 14-year-old Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa won the World Under-18 Open Championship with an unbeaten 8/10, finishing half a point ahead of the top seed, Armenia's Shant Sargsyan, in Mumbai (2-12 October). Russians Polina Shuvalova, Leya Garifullina and Rudik Makarian won the Under-18 Girls, Under-16 Girls and Under-16 Open sections respectively.

IRELAND – Jonathan Pein decimated IM Sam Collins with the black pieces, making fine use of his favourite Philidor Defence, but was then defeated in the final round of the Irish Rapidplay Championship on September 29th by Tarun Kanyamarala. Pein and Kanyamarala shared first place in Dublin with 6/7, half a point ahead of Stephen Moran and top seed IM Sam Collins. The upsets continued in the subsequent Blitz Championship as FMs Colm Daly, Henry Li and Conor O'Donnell finished outside the top three, as did Collins who came fourth. Stephen Moran pocketed first prize with 9/11, finishing half a point ahead of Killian Delaney, with Jonathan Pein a further half point back in third.

RUSSIA – The first leg of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix marked the return of Humpy Koneru, who has played little since the birth of her first child three years ago. Koneru is no longer rated over 2600, but was still the third seed at the Skolkovo Grand Prix held in the western suburbs of Moscow (11-22 September). The 32-year-old Indian finished with an unbeaten 8/11 and had the satisfaction of seeing the two players who will do battle in the next women's world championship match, Ju Wenjun and Aleksandra Goryachkina, finish half a point behind her. As such, Koneru pocketed 160 Grand Prix points, as well as €15,000, with Ju and Goryachkina leaving with 120 points.

Final scores: 1 Humpy Koneru (IND) 8/11, 2-3 Ju Wenjun (CHN), Aleksandra Goryachkina (RUS) 7½, 4 Kateryna Lagno (RUS) 6½, 5-6 Elisabeth Paehtz (GER), Valentina Gunina (RUS) 6, 7 Harika Dronavalli (IND) 5, 8-9 Alexandra Kosteniuk, Alina Kashlinskaya (both RUS) 4½, 10-11 Marie Sebag (FRA), Antoaneta Stefanova (BUL) 4, 12 Pia Cramling (SWE) 2½.

H.Koneru-A.Kashlinskaya
Moscow 2019

Something has clearly gone majorly wrong for Kashlinskaya in this IQP position and she wasn't to be given the chance to belatedly complete her development:

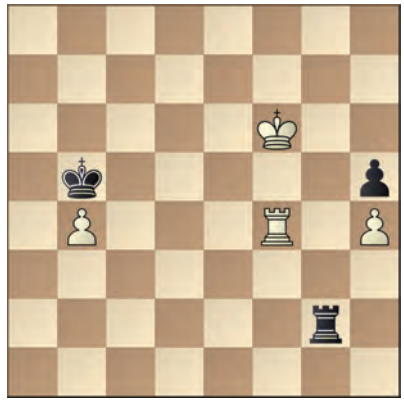
18 ♘eg5! ♗xf3

18...hxg5 19 ♘xg5 is also crushing, and if 19...g6 20 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 (or 20...♕xf7 21 ♗xe6) 21 ♖xe6.

19 ♕h7+ ♔f8 20 ♖xe6! 1-0

Playing white in the final round, Koneru comfortably held off Ju Wenjun's bid to complicate and change the result of first place, but things would have been a little more interesting had the Chinese World Champion not lost to Kateryna Lagno when leading the tournament entering round 9 or had she converted what should have been a winning endgame in the penultimate round.

Ju Wenjun-A.Goryachkina
Moscow 2019



49...♖g1?

Now White is able to simplify to a won rook and h-pawn against rook endgame where Black's king is too far away. As such, 49...♖g4! needed to be played, and if 50 ♔f5 ♖g1 when ♖f5 is no longer possible, or 50 ♖f5+ ♔b6! 51 ♖xh5 ♖xb4 52 ♖h8 ♔a7, heading for the famous Vancura draw.

50 ♖f5+ ♔xb4 51 ♖xh5 ♖h1 52 ♖h8 ♖f1+ 53 ♔e5 ♖e1+ 54 ♔f4 ♖f1+ 55 ♔g3 ♔c5 56 h5 ♖h1 57 ♔g4?

Allowing the black king to make it back just in the nick of time, whereas 57 h6! would have been decisive, and if 57...♔d6 58 h7 ♔e7 59 ♖a8! or 57...♔b6 58 ♔g4 ♔a7 59 ♔g5 when the white king will hide on h7 and Black doesn't have time to successfully switch her rook to the b-file. **57...♔d6 58 h6 ♔e7 59 h7 ♔f7 60 ♖a8 ♖xh7 ½-½**

The next leg of the Women's Grand Prix will take place in Monaco from 2-15 December, before Ju Wenjun takes on challenger Aleksandra Goryachkina in January, in a match scheduled to be split between Beijing and Vladivostok.

USA – The quality events continue apace in the American chess capital, the latest being the St. Louis Fall Classic (10-18 September). There a player we haven't heard so much from of late, Ray Robson, reminded us that he is still a force to reckon with, the 24-year-old Floridian racking up 7/9 for a 2872 performance, finishing some two points clear of Dariusz Swiercz, Varuzhan Akobian and Aleksandr Lenderman.

Home News

CREWE – IM Brandon Clarke defeated second seed Jonah Willow in the final round of the Crewe Congress (27-29 September), but had to settle for a share of first, having earlier drawn with Ali Jaunooby and because Rajat Makkar finished by reeling off four straight wins.

Open: 1-2 Brandon Clarke (Littlethorpe), Rajat Makkar (Reading) 4½/5, 3 Leysaa Bin-Suhayl (Peterborough) 4.

Major: 1 Joe Hirst (Newcastle-under-Lyme) 4, 2-8 David Patrick (Halifax), Reg Clucas (Altrincham), Carl Gartside (Macclesfield), Robert Clegg (Huddersfield), Kyle Pelling (Tameside), Peter Fisher (Wrexham), Sam Turner (Alsager) 3½.

Intermediate: 1 Julian Hawthorne (Kidsgrove) 4½, 2-3 Richard Szwajkun (Telford), Michael Carroll (Great Lever) 4.

Minor: 1-2 Patrick Coleman (Lytham St Annes), Paul Broderick (Newport) 4½, 3 Adam Miller (Wallasey) 4.

Michael Adams was happy to alternate colours while giving an anniversary simul for Barclays Bank. Playing white in the near background is Chris Flowers who came very close to winning.

LONDON – John Saunders reports from a special anniversary:

On September 29th Barclays Bank Chess Club held a double GM simul at its Canary Wharf headquarters in London to celebrate its 100th anniversary. Some 80 players lined up to face the might of Mickey Adams and Matthew Sadler, mostly from Barclays Bank CC itself, but also including some invitees from other London financial institutions. The two English super-GMs played 40 opponents each, choosing to alternate colours rather than take white on all boards. The opposition was of disparate strength, ranging from the elementary level to ratings in excess of 2200.

The simul was opened by Barclays senior management and then organiser Daniel Lindner gave a quick but informative presentation of the club's history. It is curious how many chess clubs, particularly those of public sector organisation and businesses, started up after the First World War as returning soldiers yearned for a more metaphorical form of combat. The club played for decades in the London Bank Chess League, from 1999 in the Combined Banks and Insurance Chess League and, since 2014, in the City Chess League. A number of strong players have turned out for Barclays over the years, including one grandmaster. Keith Richardson (1942-2017) worked in the New Covent Garden Market branch of Barclays some years ago and in 1975 became the country's first correspondence GM.

The grandmasters proved a little too tough for the opposition, with Sadler only conceding two draws and Adams four. Neither lost a game, but Mickey Adams was pushed back on the ropes by Chris Flowers and needed all his magic to salvage a half a point. Perhaps having Magnus Carlsen as a playing partner in the 2017 London Classic Pro-Biz Cup had rubbed off on the American financier as he played really well. Another excellent performance was put in by Masrura Khakimova, who held Matthew Sadler to a draw and was rewarded with a prize of the Sadler and Regan book *Game Changer*.

Elsewhere in the capital, Ralf Schnabel (Germany) triumphed with 4/5 in the Open at the Muswell Hill Rapidplay on September 24th, finishing half a point ahead of Gwilym Price (Godalming) and Ben Keohane (London). Salvatore Pepe (Hendon) won the Major by half a point from Brendan O'Gorman (Coulsdon), while the Minor was won by David Lewis (Hendon) and Tony Bynnersley (West London). We should also mention that while reporting on the Muswell Hill results from July in our September issue we failed to mention that David Lewis shared second place in the Minor with Adah Simon Ogah on 4½/6 – our apologies to David.

THANET – Robert Page was present as a different anniversary was marked by the Thanet Congress (16-18 August):

The Thanet Chess Congress celebrated its 50th anniversary with some special presentations to mark the occasion. Participants from the 1970 congress were invited to attend and seven took part. Each was presented with a souvenir personalised framed record of their achievement in the first congress, and unique king trophies were awarded to winners of each of the five sections. As has become tradition at the Thanet Congress, a charity bookstall was set up which raised £134 for The Royal British Legion. 112 players took part and the Open was won by IM Alan Merry, who defeated FM Martin Taylor in the final round.

Open: 1 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 4½/5, 2-3 Martin Taylor (Rainham), Partha Mulay (Wanstead) 4.

Challengers: 1-5 Trefor Owens (Broadstairs), Mike Taylor (Stockport), Patrick Burns (Bridge), Paul Jackson (Coulsdon), Zia Quader (Bury St Edmunds) 3½.

Major: 1 Robert Page (Broadstairs) 4½, 2-3 Polina Shchepinova (Horsham), Orla Dorman (Coulsdon) 4.

Intermediate: 1 Manoj Natarajan (Broadstairs) 4½, 2 Derek Hadley (Bloomsbury) 4, 3-6 Timothy Soar (Colwyn Bay), Chris Soltysiak (Athenaeum), Tyrone Jefferies (Swale), Terence Greenaway (Torquay) 3½.

Minor: 1-2 Charlie Ball (St Albans), John Couzens 4½, 3-7 Joshua Vaughan, Reg Pidduck (all Broadstairs), Aneesh Sagar (Petts Wood), Leon Garfield (Margate), David Archer (Godalming) 3½.

Solutions

September Competition

Yochanan Afek posed the following question on page 13 of our September issue:

Amatzia Avni
Variantim 2019

White cannot stop the enemy advanced pawn, but where lie his counter-chances?

R.Harris of Coventry wins a copy of Yochanan's *Extreme Chess Tactics* for his answer. The solution:

1 ♗g5+!

1 ♘d5+?! ♔f5 2 ♘e3+ (if 2 ♘e7+ ♔e4) 2...♘xe3 3 ♗xe3 (or 3 fxe3 h4!) 3...g1♕ 4 h4 tries to create a fortress, but fails to 4...♕g4 5 ♗g5 ♕xg5! 6 hxg5 h4 7 ♔f7 h3 8 ♘xg6 ♔xg5! 9 ♘e5 ♔f4 and wins.

1...♔xg5

1...♔e5 allows White to trap the black knight with 2 ♘exg6+ ♔d6 3 h3 g1♕ 4 hxg4, and so draw.

2 ♘h7+ ♔h6

Both 2...♔h4 3 ♘xg6+ and 2...♔f4 3 ♘xg6+ ♔e4 4 ♘g5+ make it a lot easier for White.

3 h4!!

This supports a future ♘g5 and prevents ...h4 which would provide a flight square for the black king (3 ♔h8? h4 wins).

3...g1♕ 4 ♘g5

And not 4 ♔h8?? ♕a1+.

4...♘f6+

Not 4...♘e5?? 5 ♔h8 when White mates, while 4...♕xf2 5 ♘f7+ ♕xf7+ 6 ♔xf7 is a draw.

5 ♔h8 ♕xg5

6 f4!!

The third star move (6 hxg5+? ♔xg5 7 f4+ ♔xf4 is winning for Black). Now wherever the black queen moves, 7 ♘f5+ leads to stalemate, as with **6...♕d5 7 ♘f5+! gxf5**. This is a further development of an idea which was first presented in Amatzia's article *How Chess Ideas Evolve* in our April issue.

Find the Winning Moves (pp. 48-50)

1) Barton-Roy
1...♖e1+! 0-1 Forcing mate next move is even stronger than 1...♕xg2+ 2 ♔xg2 ♖e5+.

2) Alekseenko-Fedoseev
1 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 2 ♕h2+ ♔g8 (2...♕h4 3 ♗xh4 gxh4 4 ♕g1 is decisive too) **3 ♖d4+ ♕e6 4 fxe6 cxd4 5 e7+ ♖f7 6 ♗xd4 1-0**

3) Arkell-Waddington
1 ♘xe6! ♔xe6? (1...♘xe6? 2 ♖xh7+ ♔d8 3 ♗xd5 wins, in view of 3...cxd5 4 ♖h8+ and even 1...♘b4 2 ♖b2 ♘xe6 3 ♖bxb4 must be close to won for White) **2 ♗g4+ ♔xe5 3 ♗xc8** collected the exchange.

4) Balaji-Pollack
1 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 2 ♕h5+ ♔g7 3 ♘f5+ ♔f8 4 ♕h6+ ♔e8 5 ♘xd6+ picked up the black queen.

5) Can-Saric
In the game 1...0-0? 2 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 3 ♕e4 allowed White to extricate his queen with tempo, whereas **1...♗d7! 2 ♘xc5 ♗c6** would have trapped it and so left Black clearly for choice after **3 ♕xc6+ ♘xc6 4 ♗e3 g5!**.

6) Shaw-Hilton
1 ♖xf7+! (1 ♖cf1 ♖d7 limps on for a few moves) **1...♔xf7 2 ♖f1+ ♔e7 3 ♕e5+ 1-0**
If 3...♔d7 4 ♖f7#.

7) Robson-Wright
The game saw a tragicomedy: **1...♖c7?? 2 ♕a6! ♘d5 3 ♖xb7+ ♔c8 4 ♖xc7+ 1-0**
In view of 4...♔xc7 5 ♕b7+ ♔d6 6 ♕d7#. Black no doubt rejected 1...♖xc6? due to 2 ♕xc6 b6 when White can escape with a draw, as with 3 ♖xb6+ axb6 4 ♕xb6+ ♔c8 5 ♕c6+, but **1...b6!** would have won, and if **2 ♕c5** the ultra-calm **2...♔c7! 3 ♕c4 ♔d8**.

8) Eames-Ashworth
1...♖f2+! 2 ♔xf2 ♘xd3+ 3 ♔g3 (3 ♔e2 ♘f4+ wins the queen) **3...♕e5+ 4 ♔f3 ♕f6+ 0-1**

9) Polak-Demidov
White lost after 1 h5? ♖xg6+ 2 hxg6 ♔g8 3 ♔g3? ♕d8, but **1 ♖b8!** would have been a deadly deflection, and if **1...♕xb8 2 ♘f7#** or 1...♖xb8 2 ♘f7+ ♕xf7 3 ♕xf7.

10) Der Manuelian-Mikhalevski
1...♗xg3+! 2 ♔g2 (the bishop is taboo in view of 2 ♕xg3? ♕xd5 3 ♕g2 ♕xa2, 2 ♔xg3? ♕e5+ 3 ♔g2 ♕g5+ 4 ♕g3 ♕xd5+ and 2 fxg3? ♕g1#) **2...♗f4** (Black has won a pawn while ripping open the white king's defences) **3 b4 ♖e5 4 ♗b3 ♖f5 0-1**

11) Vachier-Lagrave-Dominguez Perez
1 ♗xb6! ♗xb5 2 ♘xb5 ♖b8 (if 2...axb6? 3 ♘c7+ ♔d7 4 ♘xa8 ♔c6 5 ♖f7) **3 ♘c7+ ♔d7 4 ♗xa7 ♔xc7** (4...♖xb2? fails to 5 ♗b6!) **5 ♗xb8+ ♔xb8 6 ♖f7 ♗d6 7 ♖xg7** saw White reach a won endgame.

12) Fathallah-Eames
1...gxf4! 2 hxg4 hxg4 (with definite shades of Larsen-Spassky, as the open h-file and Black's kingside pawns will prove White's undoing) **3 ♖f1 ♕h4+ 4 ♔d1 f3 5 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 6 d4 fxg2 7 ♖g1 ♕f2 8 ♔d2 ♖xd4+! 9 exd4 e3+ 0-1**

13) Nayhebaver-Sapis
1...♘e5! (actually, even 1...♔f8 2 c5 ♘e5 3 ♔c7 ♔e7 seems to draw, since Black can meet 4 c6 ♘xc6! 5 ♔xc6 ♔f8 6 ♗h7 with 6...g6!, and if 7 hxg6 ♔g7, thereby setting up a slightly different fortress) **2 c5 ♘d7+ 3 ♔c6 ♘xc5! 4 ♔xc5 ♔h8** (the presence of a black pawn on g7 doesn't change the verdict that the position is drawn, and the game soon ended in stalemate) **5 ♔d5 ♔g8 6 ♔e6 ♔h8 7 ♔e7 ♔g8 8 ♗f7+ ♔h8 9 ♔f8 ♔h7 10 ♗g6+ ♔h8 11 ♗f5 g6! 12 hxg6 ½-½**

14) Sarana-Inarkiev
1 ♔f1! (the simplest; 1 ♔g1 f2+ 2 ♔g2 also draws, but does allow Black to try 2...f1♕+ 3 ♔xf1 ♔f3 when White must find 4 ♔g1 ♖d1+ 5 ♔h2 followed by 6 ♔g1 if the black rook leaves the back rank or checks from the long side; remarkably, 1 ♔e1?? was seen in the game, with the idea of 1...f2+ 2 ♔f1 ♔f3 3 ♖d8, but after 3...♖e2! 4 ♖d3+ ♖e3 5 ♖c3 ♔g3 White had to resign – not what you'd expect to see in the Russian Championship) **1...f2** (freeing f3 for the king) **2 ♖a8 ♔f5** (trying to come round the other side; 2...♔e3 3 ♖a3+ ♖d3 4 ♖xd3+ ♔xd3 5 ♔xf2 ♔e4 6 ♔e2 is, of course, an easy draw) **3 ♖f8+** (3 ♖a5+ ♔g4 4 ♖a3 is another defence) **3...♔g4 4 ♖a8** and Black is unable to make progress, with **4...♖d1+ 5 ♔xf2 ♖d2+ 6 ♔e1 ♖h2 7 ♖a3!** setting up the famous third-rank defence.

15) Giri-Duda
1 f6+! ♔e6 2 h6! ♖xg4+ and now **3 ♔f8** (the game was drawn by stalemate after 3 ♔h8?? ♔f7?? 4 h7 ♔f8 5 f7 ♖h4 ½-½, but 3...♔xf6 would have won, and if 4 h7 ♖e4) **3...♔xf6 4 h7 ♖h4 5 ♔g8** would have been an easy draw with White's king crucially not obstructing his pawn.

16) Giri-Nepomniachtchi
Black had just blundered with ...♖f3-g3?

(...♔f7 would still have drawn), which was punished by: **1 ♖a7+! ♔e6** (1...♔f8 2 ♖a6 ♔f7 transposes and 2...h4 3 ♖xg6 ♖xh3 4 ♖f6+ also wins, so long as White then avoids 4...♔g8 5 ♖xf5? ♖g3! which cuts off his king, preferring 5 ♔h5!, and if 5...♖h1 6 e6 or 5...♔g7 6 ♖xf5 ♖h1 7 ♔g4 h3 8 ♖g5+ ♔f7 9 ♔f5 h2 10 ♖h5 when the connected passed pawns easily trump Black's lone foot soldier) **2 ♖a6+ ♔f7 3 ♖f6+** (the move Nepomniachtchi must have overlooked) **3...♔e7 4 ♖xg6 ♖xh3 5 ♔g5 1-0** Once again the connected passed pawns will prove decisive.

17) Karjakin-Vachier-Lagrave

1 ♗d3! (1 ♗b3! also does the trick, but not 1 ♔g2? ♕g3+! 2 ♔f1 ♕e1+, forcing a draw) **1...♕xd3+ 2 ♔h4 ♕d4 3 ♕f8+ ♕g7 4 g5# 1-0**

18) G.Jones-D.Jakovenko

1...♕a7! 2 ♗xc8 ♕f2+ 3 ♔h3 ♕f1+ 4 ♔g4 (having lost the first tie-break game White had to play for a win) **4...h5+ 5 ♔g5 ♕e1 6 ♗f5?** (collapsing with no time; after 6 ♕d4 ♕xg3+ 7 ♗g4 hxg4 8 fxg4 anything might have happened, but 8...♗e4 9 h5 f6+ 10 ♖xf6 gxf6+ 11 ♕xf6 ♕c7 is most likely drawn) **6...f6+! 7 ♔xg6 ♕e8# 0-1**

19) Escobar Forero-Dominguez Perez

1 ♕g5? e6 was OK for Black in the game, but the calm **1 ♗c1!** would have won: **1...♕c5** (overprotecting d4; 1...♕a5? fails to 2 ♖xd4! ♗xd4 3 ♕xg6+) **2 ♗e3 e5** (trying to avoid 3 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 4 ♕xg6) **3 ♘d5 ♖e8 4 ♕h4** leaves White dominating the board and with an attack which should prove decisive, as shown by **4...♕a7 5 ♗h6** when Black lacks a single good move and ♖d3-h3 will follow.

20) Yankelevich-Perez Candelario

White looks lost and, indeed, he was unable to save the game after 1 ♕c8? ♕xh4+. 1 ♕h1 e4 is also of no use, but as pointed out by David Vigorito in his excellent ChessPublishing column on the King's Indian, **1 ♕xf4+! exf4** would have drawn, and if **2 ♔f1** (the king can also go to the g-file, but 2 ♔e2?? g5 3 hxg5+ ♔xg5 4 ♔f2 ♔f5 5 ♔g2 ♔e5! wins for Black) **2...♔g7** (or 2...g5 3 hxg5+ ♔xg5 4 ♔g2 ♔f5 5 ♔h3 ♔e5 6 ♔h4 ♔d4 7 ♔xh5, and if 7...♔e3?? 8 ♔g4) **3 ♔e2 ♔f6 4 ♔f2 ♔e5 5 ♔e2 ♔d4 6 ♔d2**.

21) Zou Chen-Sethuraman

1...♖xb3+!! 2 ♔a1 (2 axb3 ♕xb3+ 3 ♔a1 ♗b4 wins too, in view of 4 ♖c1 ♗c3+ 5 ♖xc3 ♕xc3+ 6 ♔a2 ♖xd5 7 ♖b1+ ♔c7! and ...♖d2+) **2...♖b2 3 ♖b1 ♗b4 4 ♕e3** (Black also wins after 4 ♖xb2 ♗c3 5 ♔b1 ♗xb2 6 ♕c4 ♗d4+ 7 ♕b3 ♕xb3+ 8 axb3 a2+! 9 ♔xa2 ♖a7+ 10 ♔b1 ♖a1+, as shown by Michael Roiz) **4...♕b5 5 ♖hd1 ♕c4 6 ♖xb2 axb2+ 7 ♔b1 ♖c7 8 ♕b6+ ♔a8 0-1**

22) Svidler-Albornoz Cabrera

1 ♗f4!! (1 ♖e5! ♘xe5 2 ♘xd5 ♕c6 3 ♕a5+ ♔e8 4 ♗g2 also works, as pointed out by Svidler) **1...♘xf4 2 ♘b5 ♕b6** (Black might like to return some material, but remains helpless after 2...♖xb5 3 ♕xb5, in view of 3...♘xe1 4 ♖c1!, and 2...♕b7 3 ♘a7! is a killer, as shown by 3...♗g7 4 ♘c6+ ♔c7 5 ♖ac1 ♔b6 6 ♕a5#) **3 ♘d4! 1-0** The weakness of d7 remains Black's major Achilles' heel and 3...♕b7 (or 3...♖b7 4 ♘c6+ ♔c7 5 ♕xf4+ ♔xc6 6 ♖ac1+) 4 ♘c6+ again cleans him up.

23) Anand-So

Black was able to escape and eventually hold in the game after 1 ♕f3 h6 2 ♗xb4? (2 a3! would still have left White clearly for choice after 2...hxg5 3 ♕b3! or 2...♕a4 3 axb4 hxg5 4 ♕d5+) 2...♕xb4 3 ♕d5+ ♔h8 4 ♘f7+ ♔h7 5 ♖f1 ♖e1 6 ♕xf5+ ♔g8, but the remarkable 1 **♕f1!!** would have won. The threat is 2 c5, with one very nice line running 1...h6 2 c5! bxc5 3 dxc5 ♗xc5 4 ♕c4+ ♔h8 5 ♕f7! ♖f8 6 ♕g6 hxg5 7 ♗c3. You might think that Black could save himself with **1...♕xa2**, but after **2 ♖e1 ♖f8** (2...♖xe1? 3 ♕xe1 creates too many threats) **3 ♕e2** the return of his queen gives White a decisive attack, as shown by **3...♔h8** (or 3...h6 4 ♕e6+ ♔h8 5 ♘f7+ ♔h7 6 ♗xh6!) **4 ♕h5** (4 ♘e6 also does the business) **4...h6 5 ♘f7+ ♔h7 6 ♗xh6! ♔g8 7 ♗xg7! ♘d3 8 ♖f1 ♔xg7 9 ♘xd6 cxd6 10 ♕g5+ ♔h7 11 ♕h4+ ♔g7 12 ♕g3+ ♔f6 13 ♕xd3** and wins.

24) Caruana-Nepomniachtchi

The game quickly concluded in a repetition: 1...♗f8 2 f3 ♖c4 3 ♖h1 ♕c7 4 ♕h2 ♗g7 5 ♕e2 ♗f8 6 ♕h2 ♗g7 7 ♕e2 ♗f8 8 ♕h2 ♗g7 ½-½. However, **1...♖xa3!! 2 bxa3 ♕xa3** would have won, in view of **3 f4** (3 f3 is similar) **3...♕a7!** (3...♕a4 also works), a remarkably calm retreat which leaves White completely unstuck due to the threat of ...b2: for example, **4 ♖gd1** (4 ♖d2 ♖a8 is the problem) **4...b2 5 ♕xb2 ♖xb2+ 6 ♔xb2 ♕f2+** and White will not survive on the dark squares.

This Month's New Releases

Coaching Kasparov Volume 1: The Whizz Kid (1973-1981)
Alexander Nikitin, 200 pages
Elk & Ruby
RRP £20.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.85**

Things that are undeniably great – *Breaking Bad*, Wagon Wheels, and Garry Kasparov at chess. In this book, the first part of a two-part volume by Kasparov's former trainer, Alexander Nikitin attempts to explain the role he played in establishing Garry as the pre-eminent player of his generation, and in fact one of the greatest players of all time. This first volume covers the early years of Kasparov's chess development.

This is not a new book. It was published in Russian in 1998, but this is the first English language version. One of the selling points of this new edition is the addition of all the games from a friendly blitz match between the young Kasparov and Mikhail Tal. The fact that a blitz match takes up a reasonable amount of the book (32 pages) seems somewhat surprising. Yes, it's an important match, and didn't do Kasparov any harm, but 32 pages with the games extensively annotated? Part of me thinks, well, it's only blitz, so why bother, but part of me wonders whether I'm missing the point and that failing to recognise the importance of a blitz match demonstrates the lack of seriousness which has hampered my own career. That is, of course, something Kasparov never had a problem with.

It would be easy to suggest that Kasparov had such a unique talent that he would have made it to the top regardless, and you would probably be right. It also comes clear from reading this volume that Nikitin had a heavy influence not only on Kasparov's chess, but also his life: for example, when he implored Kasparov's mother to change Garry's surname from Weinstein to Kasparov. It is the chess snippets that really interest us though. We first get an insight into the intense competitive nature of Kasparov, then aged 13, in a passing anecdote about a simultaneous display: "And in a simul against the fearsome grandmaster Romanishin he crushed his opponent, even though the latter was well aware of who he was facing."

The early part of the book is quite heavy going – it is more than 60 pages before we come across chess positions. Nikitin explains how he became involved in coaching ahead of a fateful meeting with the young Kasparov at a tournament in Lithuania. I found it just as interesting when he talks about his own career as when he recounts his time with Kasparov.

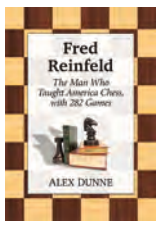
Maybe that's because the story of the professional chess player who didn't quite reach the top resonated deeply with my own experience.

As you'd expect, a lot of the games that can be found in this volume have been extensively covered elsewhere. Does that mean the book isn't worth buying? Not a bit, especially when you get insights like this: "If all your pieces stand optimally, then find an active pawn move." Some might find this straightforward – I don't; I find it priceless. I just wish there was even more such advice in the book, and indeed this is not really a training manual à la Dvoretsky, but more like a personal journal. Perhaps the book would have benefited from showing some of the training positions that the young Kasparov was confronted with and explaining how he got to grips with them.

Nikitin also relates the darker side of Kasparov. He writes, "The lad's sudden fame awoke and developed personality traits with him (and not only him) that I would never have noticed otherwise." His "Diseases became chronic and with every tournament it became harder to address them." Nikitin doesn't specify exactly what these diseases were, and it is left to the reader to guess them. That's the problem – after passages like this you are thirsting for even more gossip.

I find any book about Kasparov engrossing, and this one even more so, as it comes from someone who was deeply involved with the Kasparov camp. It's well written and a perfect addition to the library of anyone who has an interest in Kasparov, great chess or Soviet training methods. I just wish Nikitin had gone even further.

Danny Gormally



Fred Reinfeld: The Man Who Taught America Chess, with 282 Games
Alex Dunne, 194 pages
McFarland
SPECIAL PRICE £37.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £**

Fred Reinfeld is best known for his legendary output in the world of chess literature rather than his over-the-board prowess. Players of a certain age will have learned a great deal from Reinfeld's books, which were always instructive despite being haughtily dismissed in some quarters as 'potboilers'.

Little has been written about the man himself and I was intrigued to see what the McFarland treatment would unearth on this neglected chess personality. What was he like as person? What made him develop into such a prolific writer and how strong was he as a player? The blurb was promising: "This, the first book on Reinfeld, covers his remarkable contributions to the chess world, with many of *his* ideas and writings quoted in their original context and with many of his famous annotations preserved for the modern reader."

The book works well when Reinfeld's personality is allowed to shine through and we can see the chess world through his observant eyes. A case in point is this snippet about Alekhine.

"Yet, for all his daring at the chessboard, he was burdened with strangely timorous quirks of character [...] for example, although he was virtually a chain-smoker, he always kept his cigarettes in his pocket. When he wanted to smoke, he would reach into his pocket and maneuver one cigarette out without removing the pack. In this way he avoided the social necessity of offering his companion or opponent a cigarette!"

However, overall, I was left feeling I didn't know an awful lot more about Reinfeld and his life. Maybe there just isn't much to know; as a hard-working author who died at the relatively young age of 54. There are very few photographs in the book – Reinfeld didn't like his picture being taken – which is another reason his personality remains somewhat illusive throughout the book.

Frankly, his chess results were mediocre compared to those of the star American players, although he could be a dangerous, albeit inconsistent opponent. For example, he finished in tenth place out of 12 at Pasadena in 1932, despite beating Reshevsky and drawing with both Alekhine and Kashdan who took the top two places.

It is particularly interesting that Reinfeld scored well against Reshevsky. The latter played uncharacteristically weakly at times in their encounters, regardless of colour. For example, it is not so easy to recall many collapses such as this one.

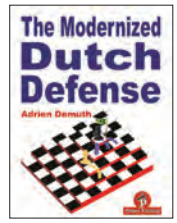
S.Reshevsky-F.Reinfeld
Pasadena 1932

26...♖xc3! 27 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 28 ♕xc3 ♗xd4+ 29 ♔h2 ♗xc3 30 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 31 ♘d3 ♕e4 0-1

The majority of the games are presented without annotations of any kind. This makes it difficult to determine Reinfeld's style of play and it would have been much better if more games had been annotated.

No doubt the author worked hard to assemble the material, but one is left with a feeling of disappointment that there is not a lot more of it, especially as it seems very unlikely that there will be more books on Reinfeld and that this one has been anticipated for so long. Curiously for McFarland, there are production issues too. The card cover is too thin with the result that it curls away from the book on its own accord, almost as if it is trying, in supernatural fashion, to reveal more secrets of the life and times of Reinfeld than can be found within its physical pages. In conclusion, this book feels like a missed opportunity.

Sean Marsh



The Modernized Dutch Defense
Adrien Demuth, 470 pages
Thinkers Publishing
SPECIAL PRICE £29.95 **SUBS' £26.95**

Thinkers Publishing continue to produce books at quite an alarming rate. This one takes a look at the Dutch Defence, using the Leningrad variation as the main line. Demuth, a French Grandmaster, also wrote the recent volume on *The Modernized Reti* for Thinkers Publishing, which was printed in December 2017 and has already gone to a second, revised edition (appearing in November 2018). We can safely conclude that Thinkers Publishing don't let the grass grow under their feet.

The author comes out of his corner fighting: "Throughout the book I have tried not only to look for variations where there is always life and winning chances for Black, but also to offer decent continuations, and not just say that 'Black has counterplay', when he might clearly be worse, which is the case in some books." His intended reach is ambitious too: "I believe that the material offered here can help players from club level to GM level."

The book starts with the 'Early Sidelines after 1 d4 f5', which covers the usual variety of weird and wonderful attempts to prove 1...f5 is simply a weakness. Demuth then moves on to the main lines, or 'Classical Systems', before concluding with coverage on how to play the Dutch against the Reti and English Openings. There could be an issue with nomenclature here, as players who prefer the Classical Dutch to the Leningrad will find themselves disappointed with the content in the 'Classical Systems' section.

There is a lot of untested material here. This is all very well and it always good to see authors not simply producing a lazy database dump, but I think the pudding has been somewhat overegged on this particular occasion. The problem is the book loses its focus as there is almost too much material. This would be all very well in an 'ideas' book, such as Minev's volumes on *New and Forgotten Ideas* in both the French (second edition, Thinkers' Press, 1988) and,

coincidentally enough, the Dutch (Thinkers' Press, 2003) – but it makes a repertoire book murkier than it needs to be.

One problem with trying to cram in too much material is that a lot of the lines just seem to peter out and we are left with one-line summaries that are too vague and general to be particularly inspiring.

In this position, for example, we are simply told: "The c4-pawn can be seen as a source of satisfaction for Black as long as it doesn't become a weakness." That isn't likely to help readers plan their next steps for the game.

Further vague comments include: "We have already seen this idea several times. It has worked really well for Black in practice, and I won't go any further into the specifics"; and "Our pieces have reached pretty active outposts, so it seems fully playable for Black." It is as if the author has spread himself too thinly over the course of the 460+ pages and has fallen between two stools.

There are other oddities, such as this one. After 1 ♘f3 f5 2 d3 ♘c6 3 e4 e5 Demuth mentions 4 d4, but says, "I won't analyse this position. I don't think your opponent is likely to play it", with the stated reason being it is a reversed Vienna Game (shouldn't that be Vienna Gambit?), and that "You can find some theory in the books, or just look at some games." I don't think it is out of the question that readers would have preferred some guidance in *this* book rather than have to dig around elsewhere.

There is so much material here that there is a real danger of being unable to see the wood for the trees. I am not convinced readers need to know in-depth coverage of lines such as 1 d4 f5 2 ♕d3, all the way down to new tries on the second move, such as the obscure 2...♘c6. It would have been very helpful if an essay had been included at the start of each section, laying out the basics of what will follow, or even a summary at the end of the respective parts. The book also desperately needs a section of well-annotated model games, which would be more valuable than a lot of the torso variations. Finally, the book section of the bibliography is surprisingly small and of the six books mentioned one is the author's own work on the Reti.

In conclusion, this book tries to do too much and ends up missing the mark. Club players will find it very difficult to wade through the excess of material to put together a repertoire and stronger players will be disappointed by the vagueness of prose. A tough edit of the tome would be required to make it into a much more accessible and useful study of the Dutch Defence.

Sean Marsh

A Startling Chess Opening Repertoire
Chris Baker & Graham Burgess,
192 pages, paperback
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.19**

Experienced IM Chris Baker has updated Graham Burgess' 1998 startling repertoire for White. The repertoire itself hasn't really changed, with its cornerstones of the Max Lange and 4 ♕xd4 and the Rossolimo against the Sicilian still very much intact, but all of the lines have been updated, with many new startling ideas uncovered for White along the way. If you want an exciting repertoire as White, as well as one which won't require excessive work, *A Startling Chess Opening Repertoire* should still do the business at club level.

Beyond Material
Davorin Kuljasevic, 336 pages, paperback
RRP £21.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £19.79**

The autumn has been a golden time not just outdoors (when it's not been raining), but also for instructional material for the club and tournament player. On top of the new releases by Franco and Kislik (see below) comes this new work from New in Chess. Croatian GM Kuljasevic's mission is to explain how to accurately assess your compensation after a sacrifice by looking at such things as improved activity, time and outposts. Even the most timid reader will also realise that it's possible to remain material down for a significant amount of time, and yet not be losing. If you're looking to make your game less static and more dynamic, Kuljasevic should guide the way.

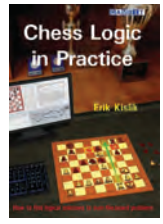
Bishop and Knight Save the Day
Sergei Tkachenko, 266 pages, paperback
RRP £11.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £10.75**

Endgame study and chess problem expert Tkachenko returns for Elk & Ruby by presenting '100 studies with just a bishop and knight in the finale'. Most of the solutions are, again, no more than six moves long, meaning that this work can be enjoyed not least by those who love their chess and commute by public transport.

Chess Informant 141
Sahovski Informator, 350 pages, paperback
RRP £32.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.69**

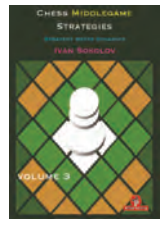
Subtitled 'Infinitum', the latest 'Informator' brings together not just all the latest leading games, novelties, endgames and studies, but also several columns. These include a detailed report on the Riga Grand Prix, Michael Prusikin's recommendations for Black in the Exchange Lopez and a new column from Danny Gormally, 'Danny's Chess Diary'.

As ever, if you'd also like the material from *Chess Informant 141* in CD format, do just add £10 to your order (Subscribers – £9), while the CD alone is also available, for just £9.99 or £8.99 for Subscribers.



Chess Logic in Practice
Erik Kislik, 240 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

This follow-up work to *Applying Logic in Chess* sees the acclaimed chess trainer continue to map out a logical groundwork to help the reader succeed in their games. Kislik recommends certain thinking techniques as well as positional guidelines, while supplying fascinating if logical advice on how to play in certain types of better or worse positions. If you want to cut out such things as making painfully slow moves or struggling for a plan when your opponent is well centralised, or just want a thought-provoking read, this new work from Gambit could well do the trick.



Chess Middlegame Strategies Volume 3
Ivan Sokolov, 328 pages, paperback
RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

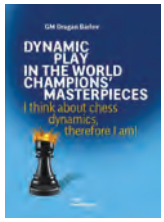
Ivan Sokolov concludes his guide to middlegame strategy for Thinkers Publishing with this third volume subtitled 'Strategy Meets Dynamics'. Through the course of seven chapters and 43 well-annotated games Sokolov looks at a number of dynamic middlegame positions, reflecting especially on the strategic considerations within each one. Not everyone will fully appreciate his coverage of the Anti-Moscow Gambit in the

Semi-Slav, rich though the arising middle-game positions are, but the coverage of both the exchange sacrifice and 'Karpov's King in the Center' cannot fail to educate and inspire most readers.

If you'd like to purchase all three volumes of *Chess Middlegame Strategies*, they are available together for the special price of £75 from Chess & Bridge or just £67.50 for Subscribers.

Coach Jay's Academy #1: White Belt Chess Lesson Book
Jay Stallings, 36 pages, glossy softback
RRP £11.95

This is a book aimed at juniors who are brand new to the game and features leading Californian chess coach Jay Stallings' "Five Disciplines of Chess": Checkmate, Defence, Endgame, Strategy, and Tactics, all illustrated with the assistance of some comic-style characters. Various other books in the vast *Coach Jay's Academy* series are available from Chess & Bridge – do see the website or call 0207 486 7015.



Dynamic Play in the World Champions' Masterpieces
Dragan Barlov, 272 pages, hardback
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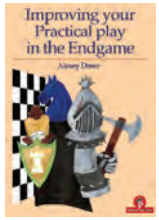
This work for Chess Informant from a Serbian GM focusses on dynamic play. Barlov has selected 40 of his favourite dynamic games from the world champions to annotate and also supplies 120 exercises.



Improving Your Practical Play in the Endgame
Alexey Dreev, 268 pages, paperback
RRP £27.95

Thinkers Publishing certainly continue to attract big name authors, this new work by the strong Russian GM following hot on the heels of the second volume of Gata Kamsky's *The Chess Gamer*. Dreev is fully aware that rules and principles don't help in all endgame positions, but that even there certain things can really help the player striving for the full point, as well as the defender. The material is certainly quite advanced at times, but even the hard-working stronger club player should glean much from Dreev's advice on such topics as converting an advantage, hidden resources and prophylaxis.

Navigating the Ruy Lopez Vol. 1 to 3
Fabiano Caruana, PC-DVD;
running time: 16 hours, 18 minutes
SPECIAL PRICE £75.**SUBSCRIBERS £67.50**

This trilogy of opening DVDs may not at first seem cheap, but paying £75.00 for over 16 hours of instruction from the long-standing world no.2 is surely a bargain, that is at least if you play the Ruy Lopez as White. In discussion with IM Oliver Reeh, Caruana explains the main ideas for both sides in each often complex sub-variation, while mapping out a repertoire for White. That means that not only do the famous main lines, such as the Breyer and Chigorin, receive plenty of attention, but so does the Anti-Marshall with 8 a4, the Berlin and everything else, including all those tricky third move sidelines.

New in Chess Yearbook 132
Peter Boel, René Olthof & Jan Timman (eds.), 256 pages, paperback
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The latest *Yearbook* features Ruslan Ponomariov on the cover with the strapline: 'Rossolimo secrets Magnus taught me'. Inside you will find all the usual features, including some six opening surveys on the Sicilian, including one on the Yugoslav Dragon. There's also a look at some important ideas from the correspondence world by Erwin L'Ami, while Glenn Flear compares some recent 1 d4 and 2 c4 repertoire works.

Planning: Move by Move
Zenon Franco, 416 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

The Paraguayan Grandmaster is developing a repertoire as an excellent author, not least when with it comes to general instructional volumes for Everyman's *Move by Move* series. Planning is one of those topics which often goes unstudied by the club player, but is a very important skill to master. Franco presents the typical plans in some of the more common pawn structures. He then examines how one must keep coming up with plans when not just manoeuvring, but also when attacking and defending, while also presenting some very useful advice on simplification.

Also recently released by Everyman Chess is *Counterattacking Systems versus 1 e4 and 1 d4* (416 pages; RRP £19.99; Subscribers – £17.99), which fuses together Nicolai Pedersen's *Play the Benko Gambit* and Peter Lalic's *Play the Accelerated Dragon*.

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I've been thinking about... thinking (analysing, calculating, looking at the pieces – whatever you want to call it). I've been mulling over why the brain performs better one day than the next. Some reasons for worse performance are obvious – ill health, ambient distractions, things on your mind, tiredness – but the results don't always turn out as you might think.

I can think of an occasion during my misspent youth when I woke up on a Saturday morning with a stonking hangover in a sleeping bag in an unfamiliar place. I had been at a friend's party – and realised I was still there, lying amidst the detritus. I also recalled to my horror that I was due to be playing a county match that afternoon. And, looking at my watch, realised that the starting time was only a few hours away.

Long story short – I made it to the match and won my game, against a higher-rated opponent. OK, that was probably the exception that proved the rule. No doubt I've managed to erase from my memory rather more numerous occasions when unsuitable preparation for a game ended in disaster. However, there may be a strange sort of logic to it. If you arrive at a game, feeling ill or at some sort of disadvantage, you tend to discount any chance of a result that you may otherwise have entertained – and thus play without pressure. I can think of other occasions when I've sat down at the board in a bad frame of mind for whatever reason and unexpectedly played a decent game despite myself.

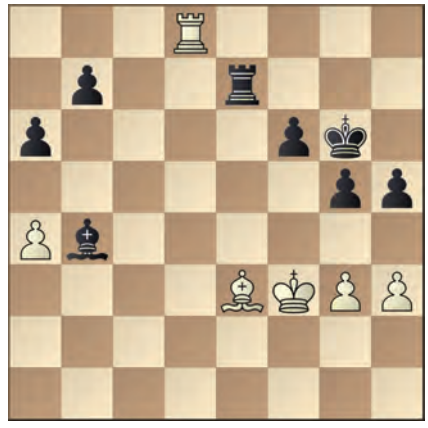
What prompted this month's subject matter wasn't chess at all. These days my cogitations are mainly confined to crosswords and puzzles in newspapers. I'm reasonably adept at them without being exceptional. If my puzzle performance were rated on the Elo scale I guess I'd be around 2000-2100. Sometimes I zip through a crossword or solve one of the tricky new sudoku variants (jigsawdoku or sandwich sudoku) in double-quick time. Other days I stare at the blank grid of my *Guardian* crossword for half an hour before giving up in disgust.

But one thing I have noticed is that it helps mightily not to plug away at an unsolved clue for too long. The longer you wrack your brains, the more elusive the solution. Much better to skip to another clue than to keep torturing yourself. Then, assuming you make a bit of progress elsewhere, you return to the difficult clue a few minutes later and often find the answer pops into your mind quite easily. The same technique applies when you are left with, say, half a dozen clues which just won't come. Put the paper down and go and do something else for a while. You return to the crossword later and, as often as not, you solve the remaining clues like shelling peas.

This leaves two questions in my mind. One is – why does this technique work so well? – and the other – is it transferable to chess thinking? The obvious answer to the first is that your brain and body benefit from taking a break. That might be rather more obvious to the reader than it is to me as I have rather a relentless approach to mental work in general. What I call the Magnus Magnusson principle: "I've started so I'll finish." It's the same with car journeys: I don't like taking breaks as I am impatient to get to my destination. It's a very bad failing and no doubt contributes to my less than impeccable chess performance.

So the answer to the first question also answers the second. Taking a break is a good idea when playing chess and recommended in most instructional books on the game. However, it is not so simple at the chessboard as it is when solving a newspaper puzzle. For one thing modern time controls don't allow you to take a very long break, and for another you're not really supposed to get up and take a breather when it's your turn to move. Chess is also dissimilar in that it is annoyingly sequential: you have to deal with the position in front of you before turning your attention to other 'clues'.

Back in the day (and still sometimes in UK leagues today), there could be a large break in play afforded by the adjournment. It was strange how the second session could feel so different from the first, almost as if they were two separate games. Here's an amusing example of an adjourned game I played in the London League many moons ago which suggests that a long break in play is not always advantageous.



I was Black, having sealed my last move (38...♔f7-g6). As was my wont, I spent quite some time analysing this position at home, in an era when computer analysis was only so-so, and resumed the game a couple of weeks later. The game continued **39 ♖g8+ ♔f7 40 ♖d8 ♖e8 41 ♖d7+ ♖e7 42 ♖d8**. After these couple of repetitions, I went into my home analysis with **42...♗a5** and eventually exploited my material advantage to win the game.

On the train home I got out my pocket set to play through the game in its entirety for the first time and it was only then that the full horror hit me. It had not been a 'couple' of repetitions: White could have written 42 ♖d8 on his scoresheet and claimed a threefold repetition. I had concentrated all my energies on analysing the adjourned position and had long since lost sight of the fact that the king had arrived on g6 from f7. Luckily for me, so had my opponent or this would have been one of the shortest and most embarrassing adjournment sessions of all time. I guess that shows that taking a break is not always such a great idea.

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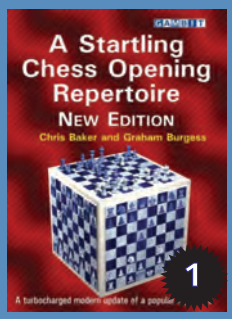

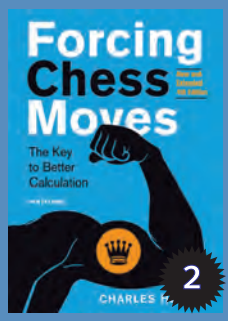

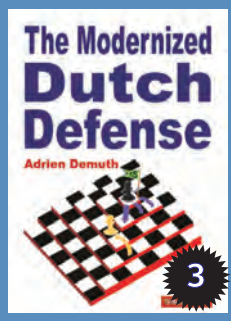

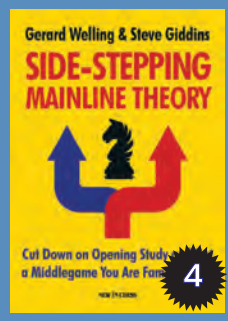

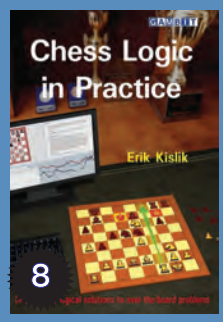

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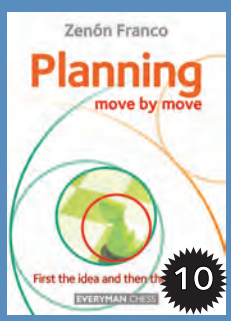

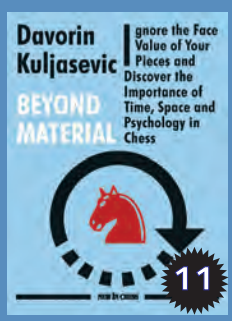

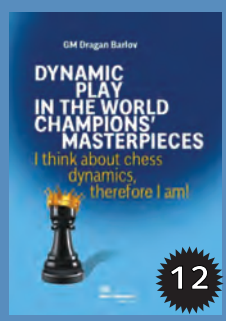

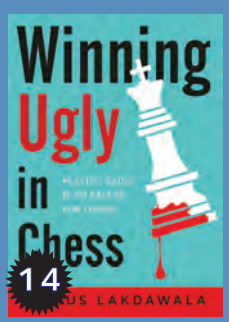

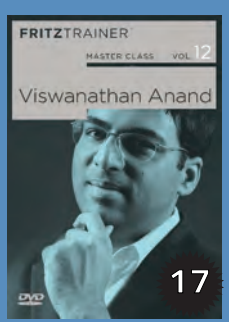

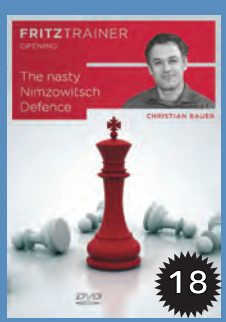

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